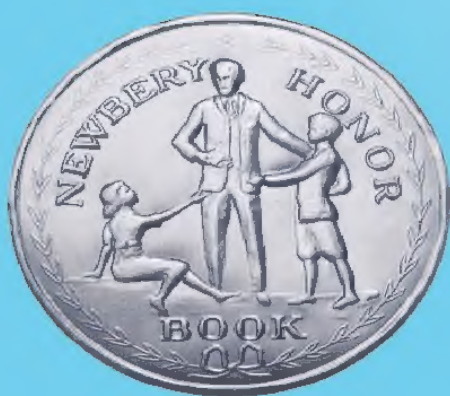
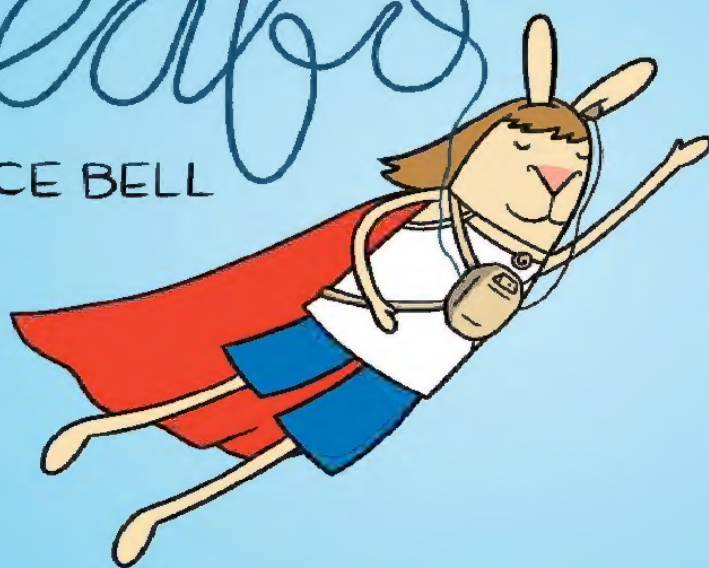


# El Deafo

CECE BELL



"I love *El Deafo*! It's everything you could want in a book: funny and touching and oh so smart."  
— R. J. Palacio, author of *Wonder*







# CECE BELL

Color by David Lasky



AMULET BOOKS  
NEW YORK





# El Deafo





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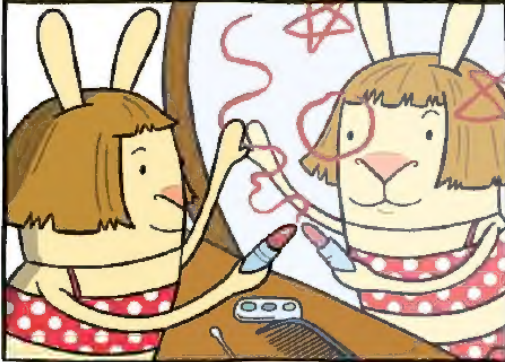


For George and Barbara Bell,  
parents extraordinaire



one

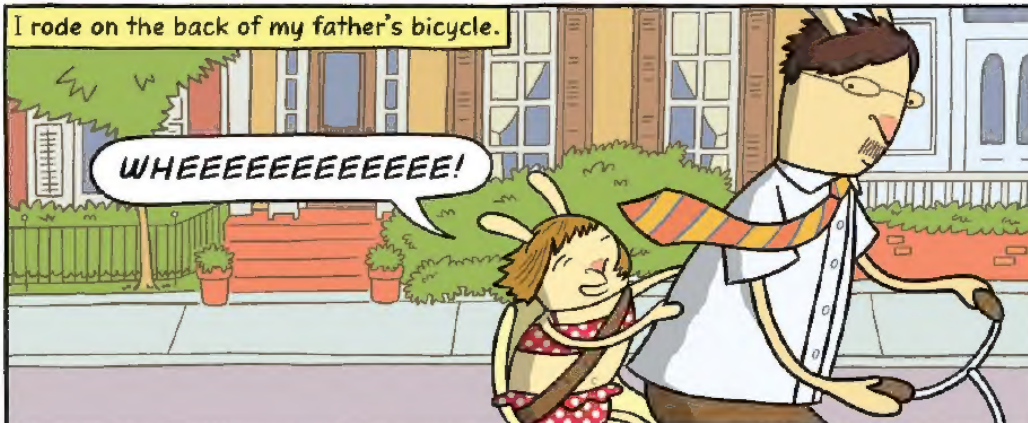
I was a regular little kid. I played with my mom's stuff.



I watched TV with my big brother, Ashley, and my big sister, Sarah.



I rode on the back of my father's bicycle.



I found caterpillars with my friend Emma.

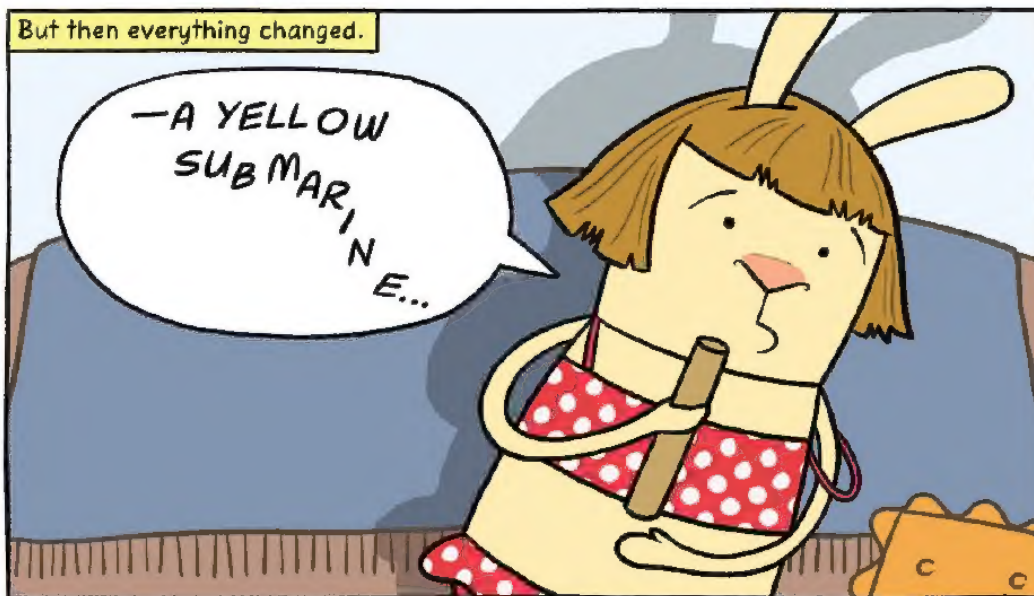


And I sang.



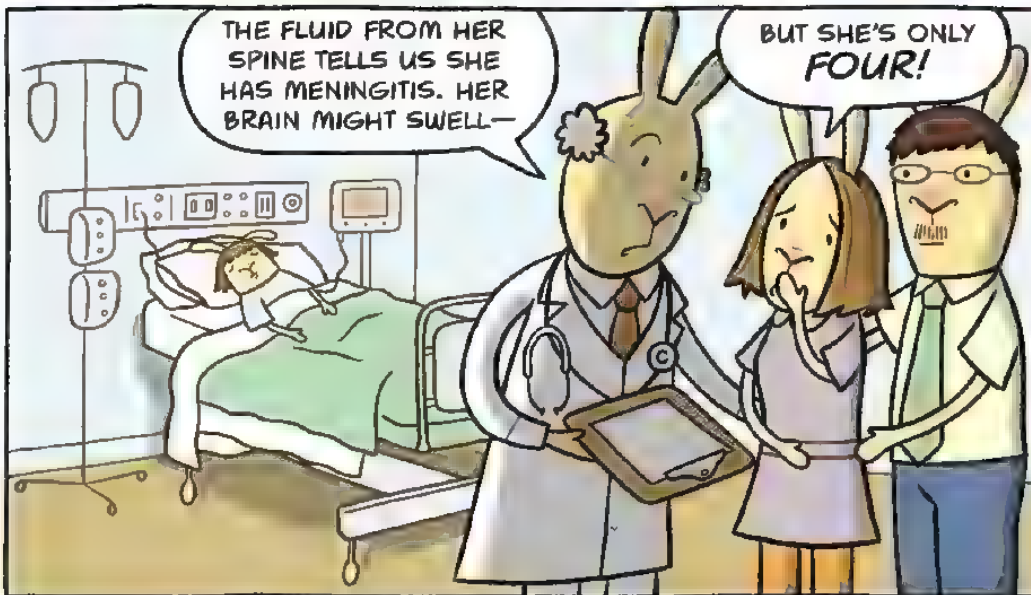
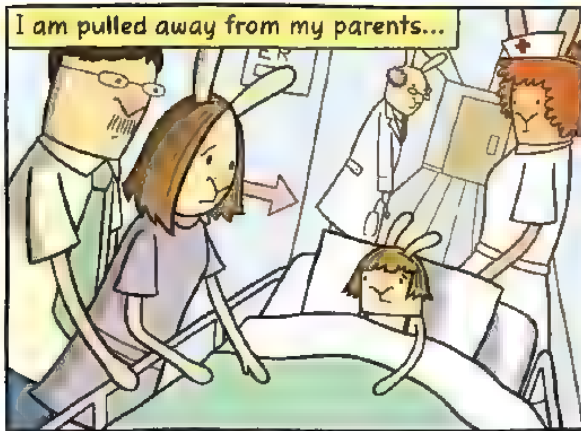
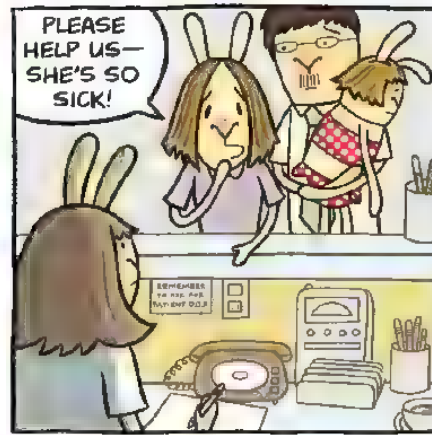
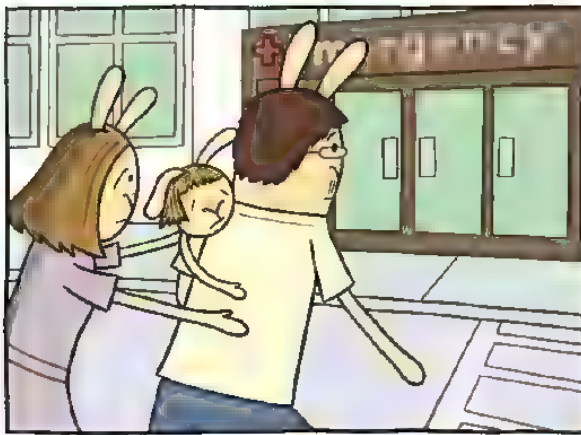


But then everything changed.

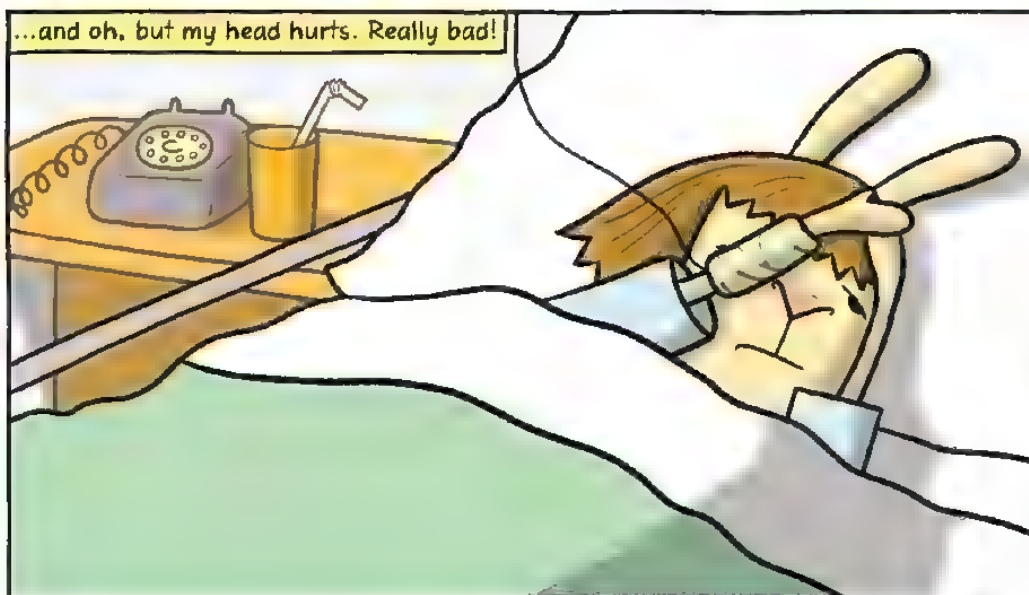
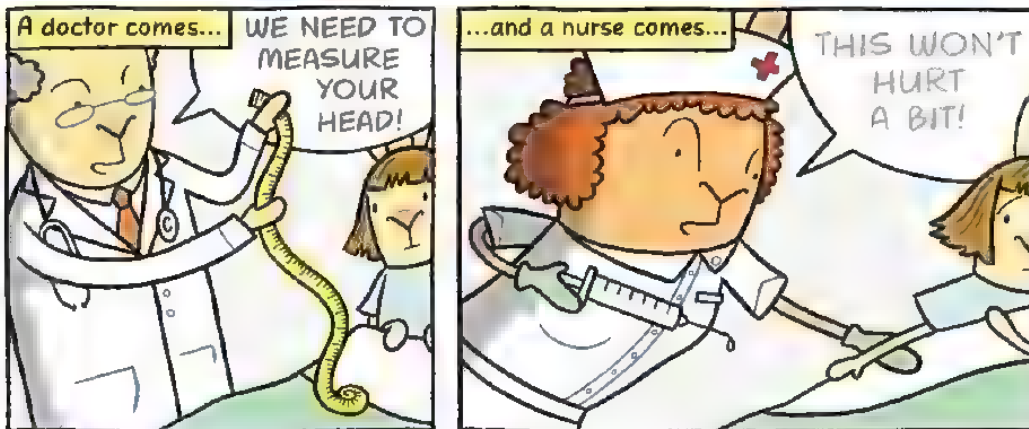
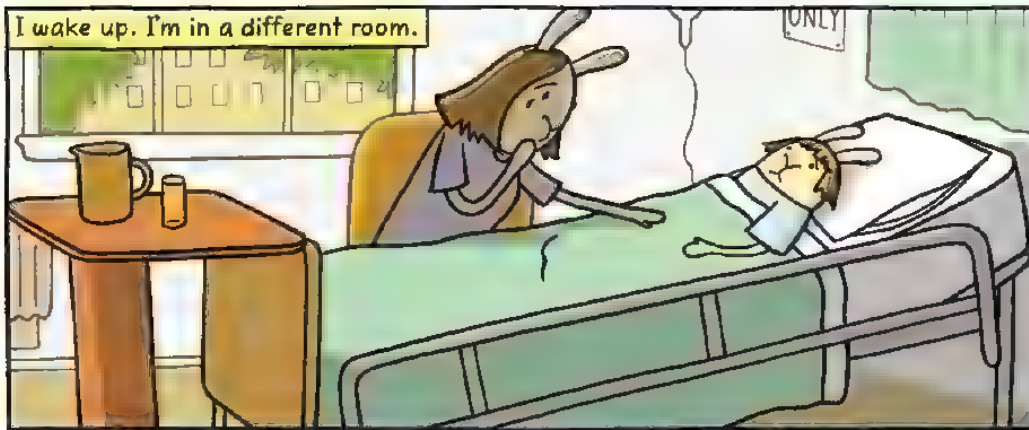


My parents rush me to the hospital.

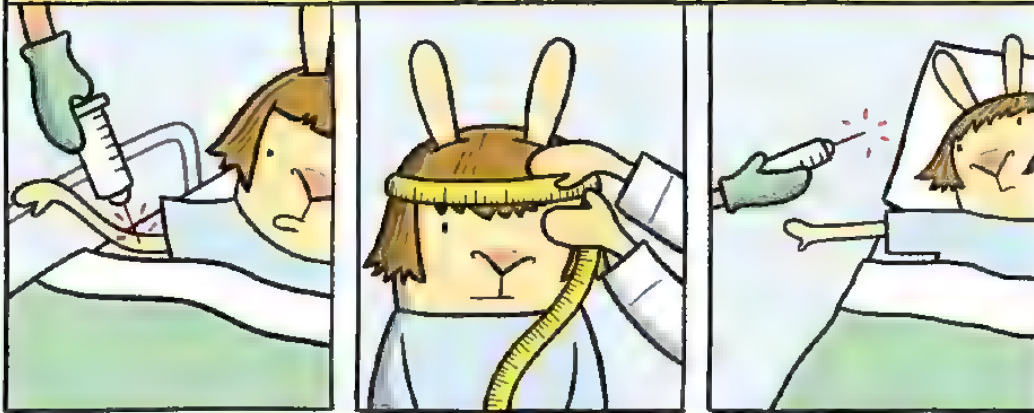




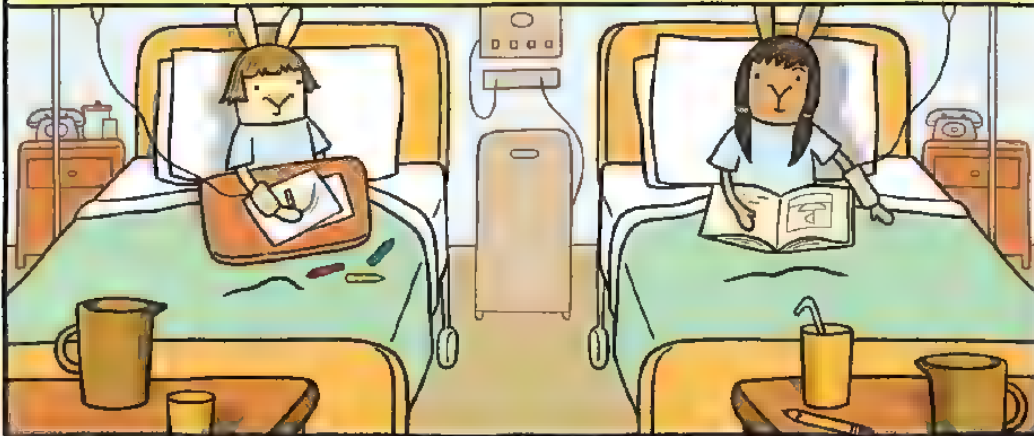




The arm prickings and head measurings are endless! It looks like I'll be here for a while.



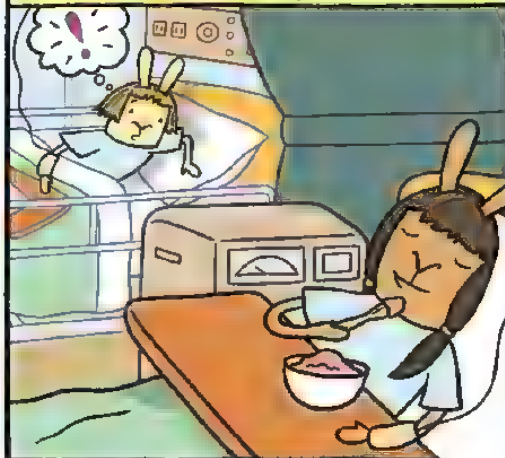
But after many days of treatment, I am well enough to share a room with another sick kid.



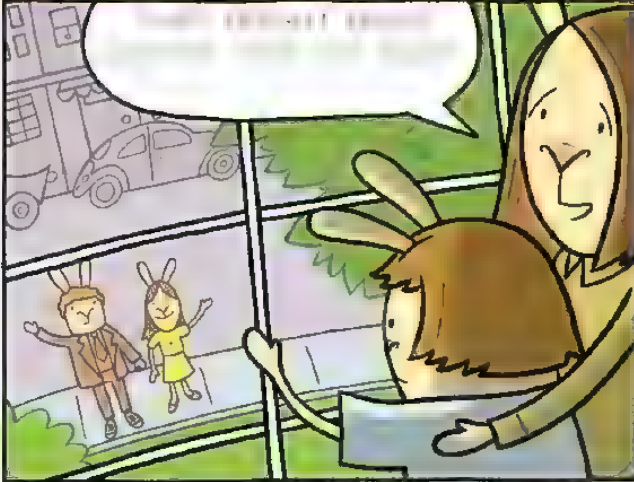
Something is different, though. But what? I can't quite figure it out.



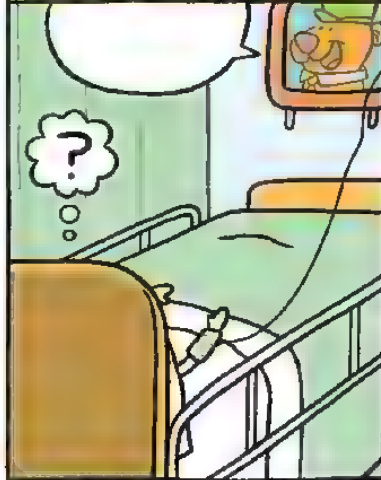
For one thing, how come I never get any ice cream? The other kid gets it all the time!



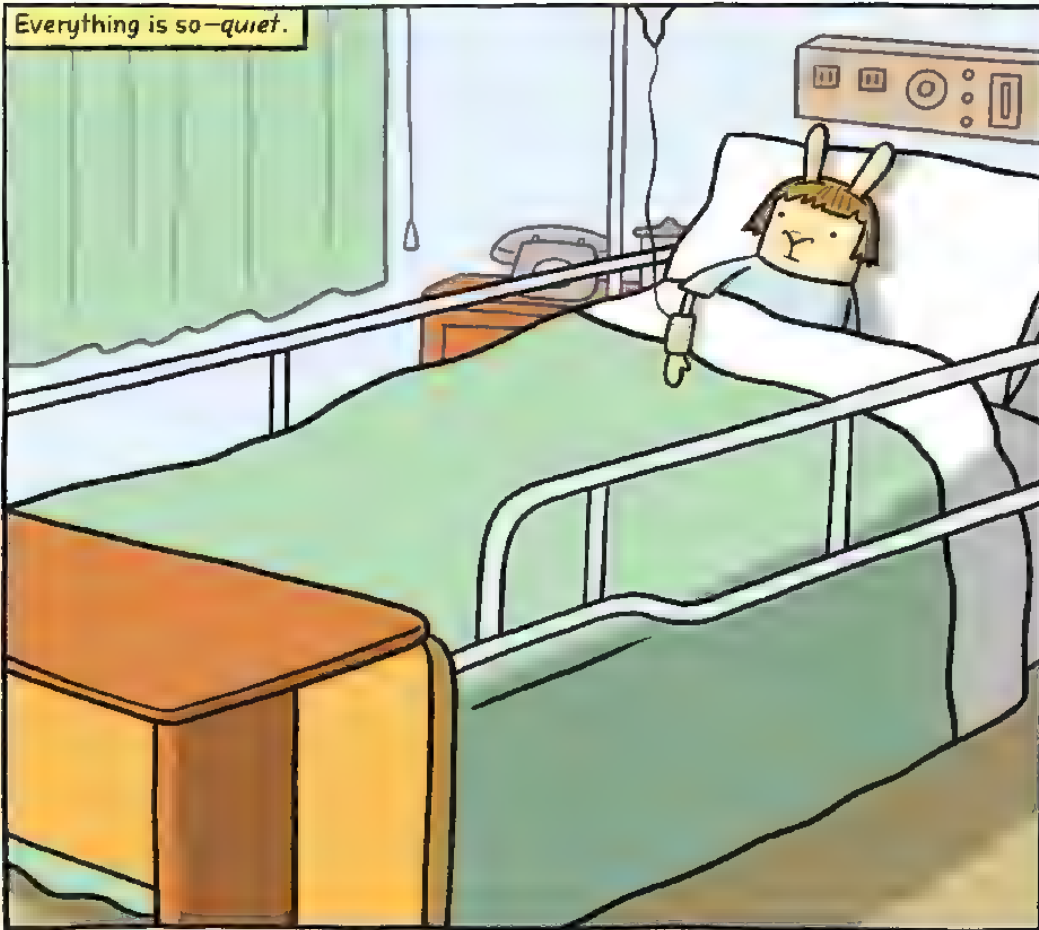
Why can't Ashley and Sarah come up to my room to talk to me?

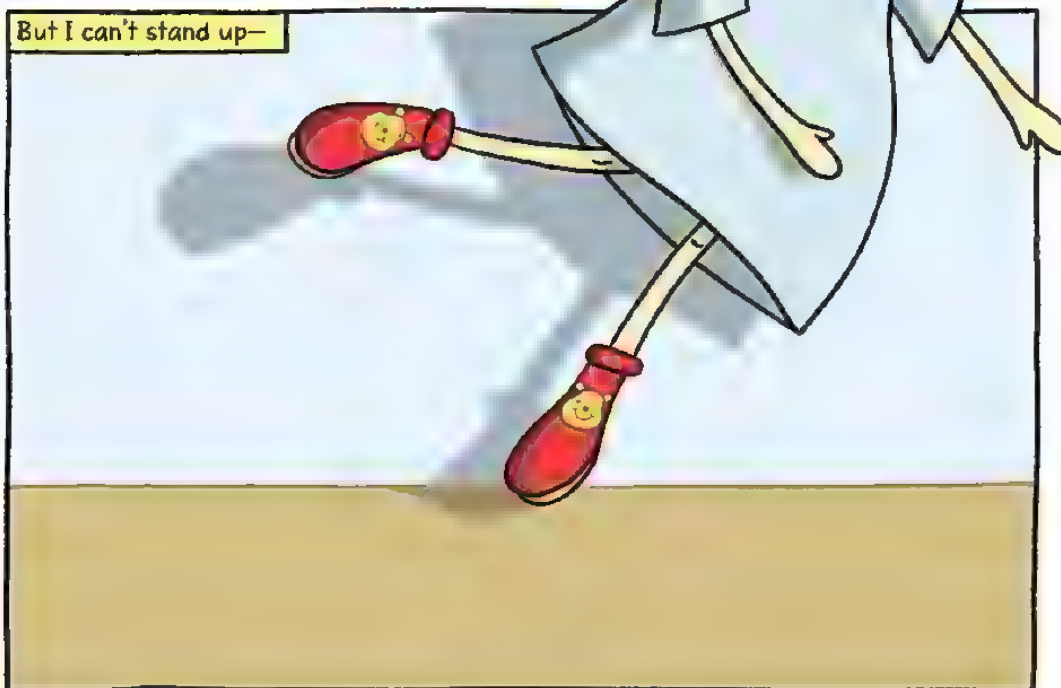
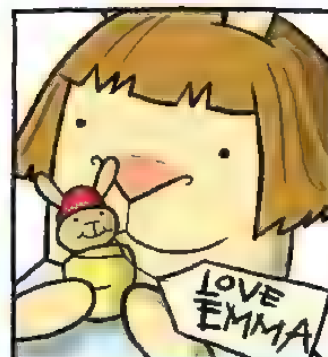


And how come the TV doesn't make any sense?

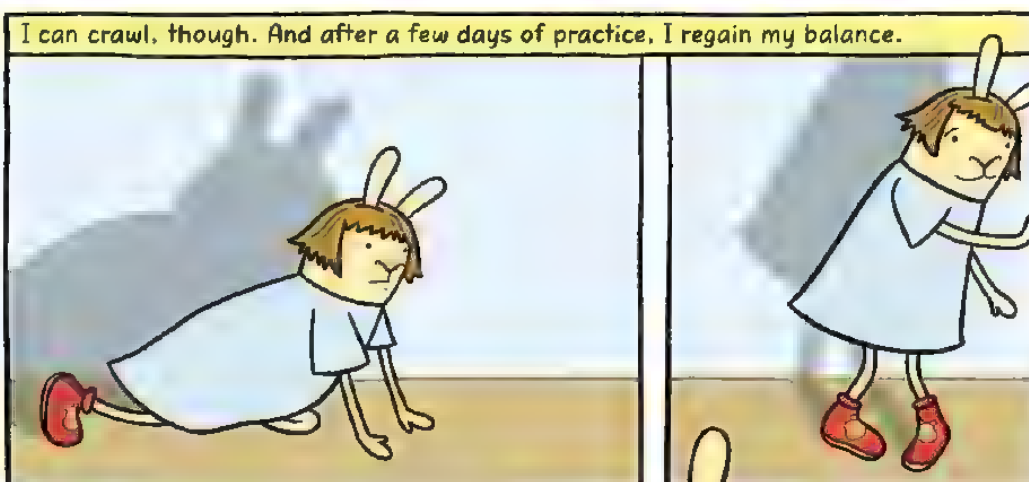
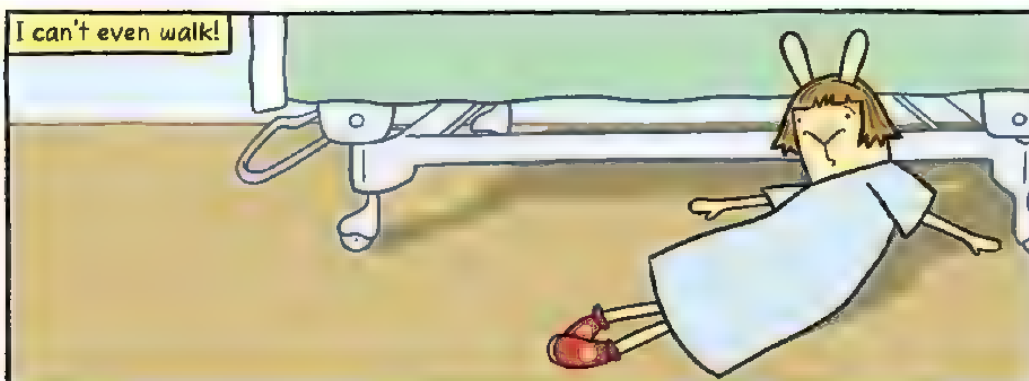


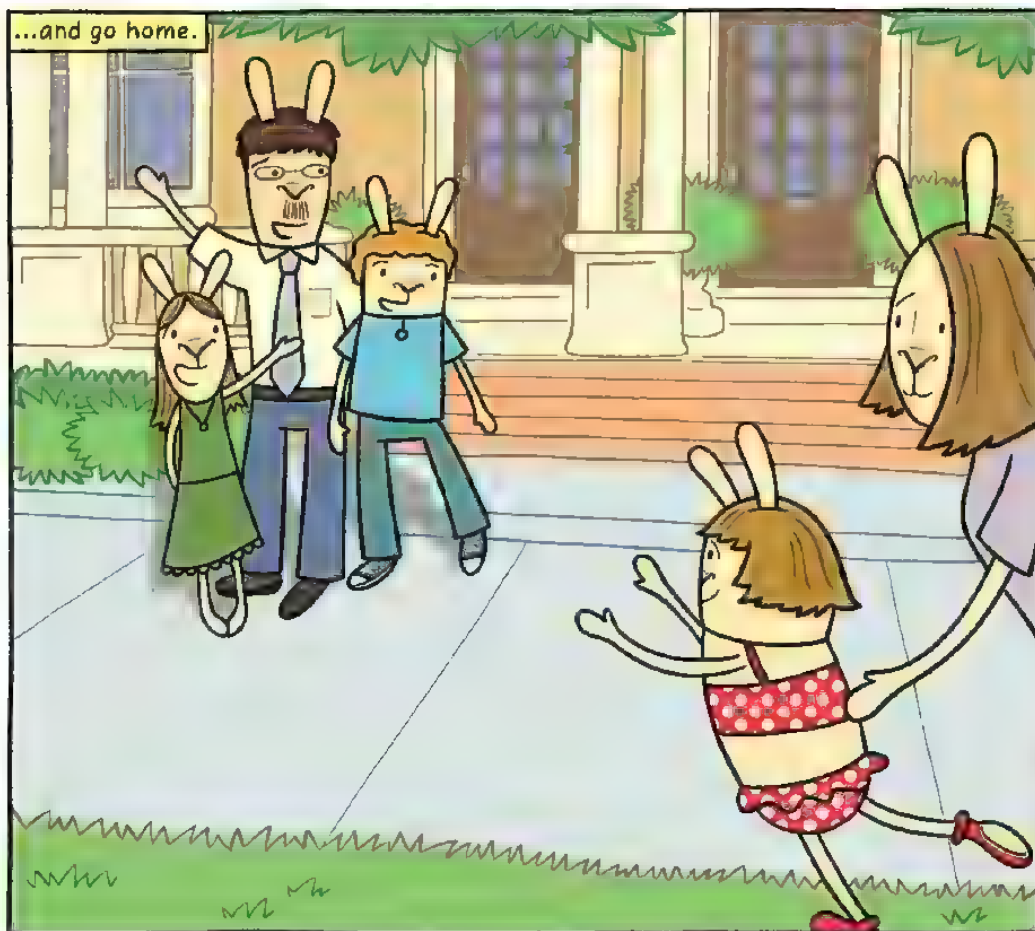
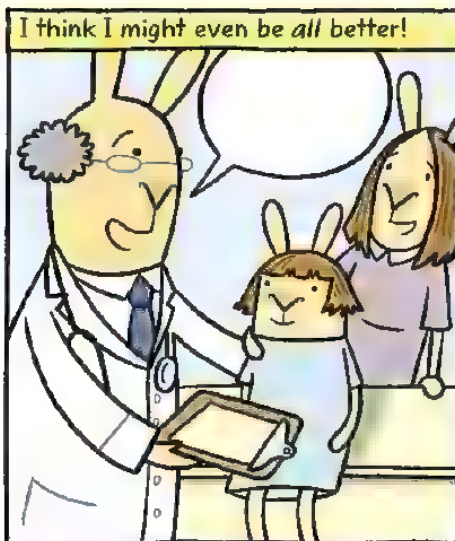
Everything is so—quiet.



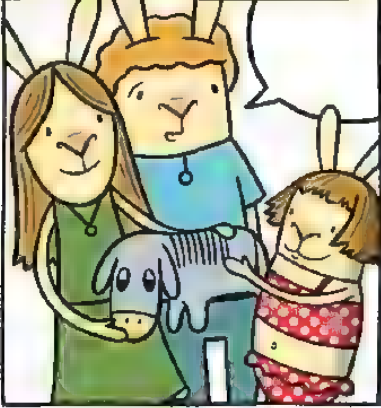




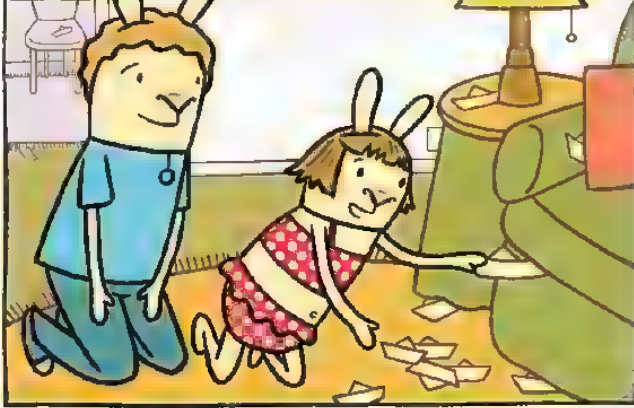




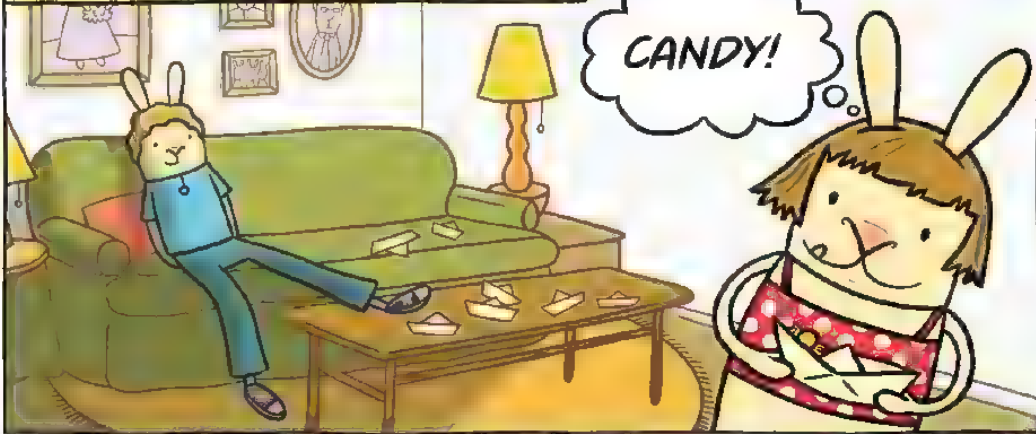
Miracle of miracles, my siblings  
are being nice to me!



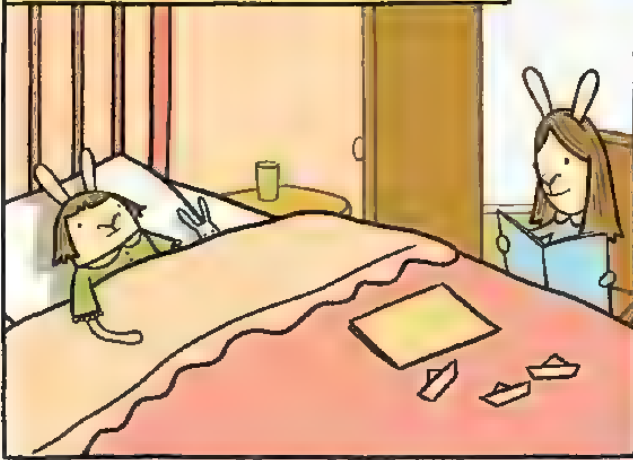
Ashley has made and hidden hundreds of paper  
boats all around the house just for me...



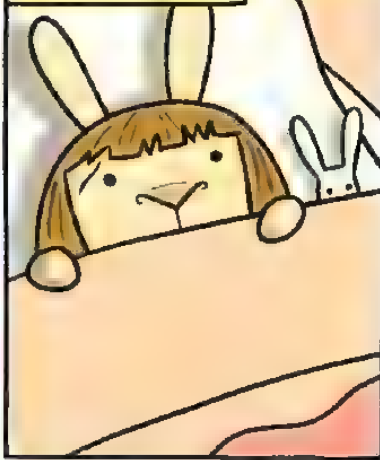
...and has filled each one with a special surprise.



And Sarah sits close to my bed at night...

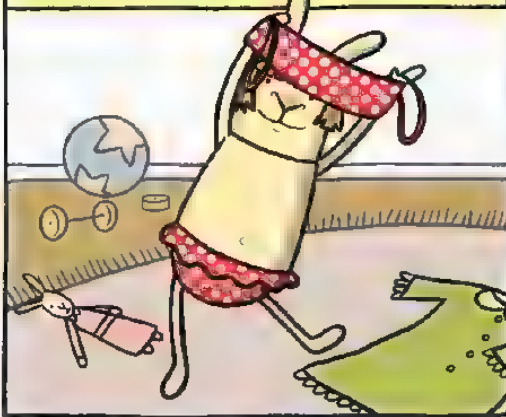


...until I fall asleep.

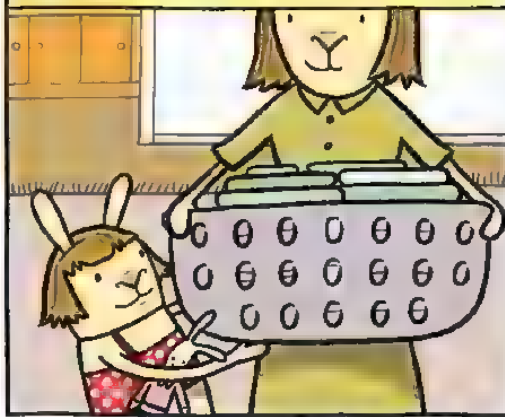




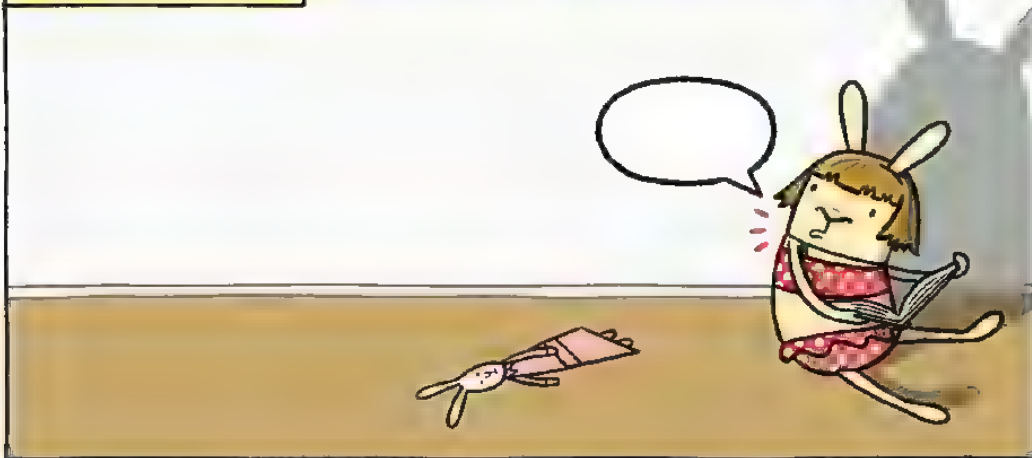
I wake up every morning happy and relieved to be home.

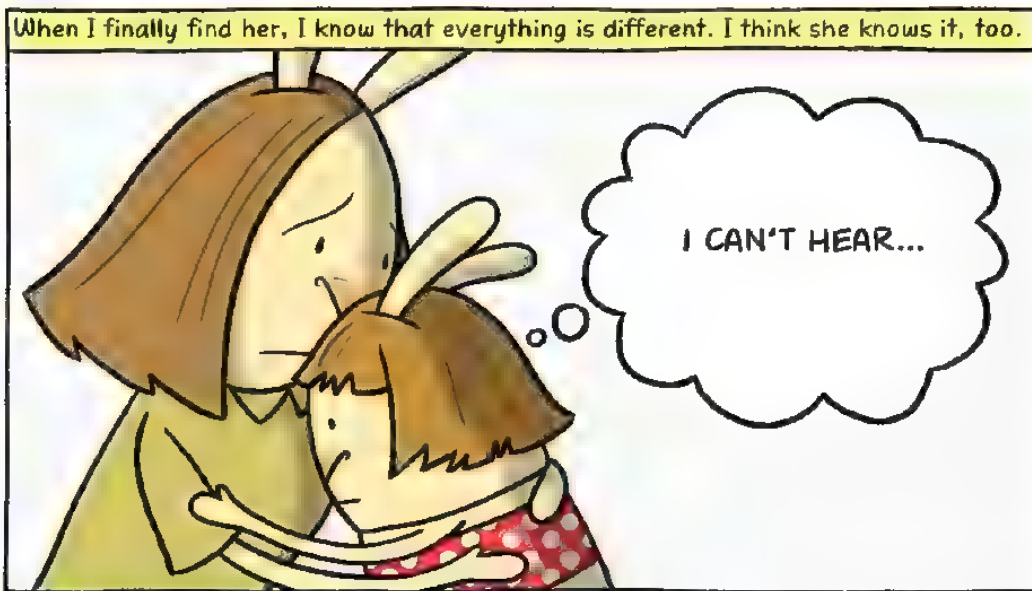
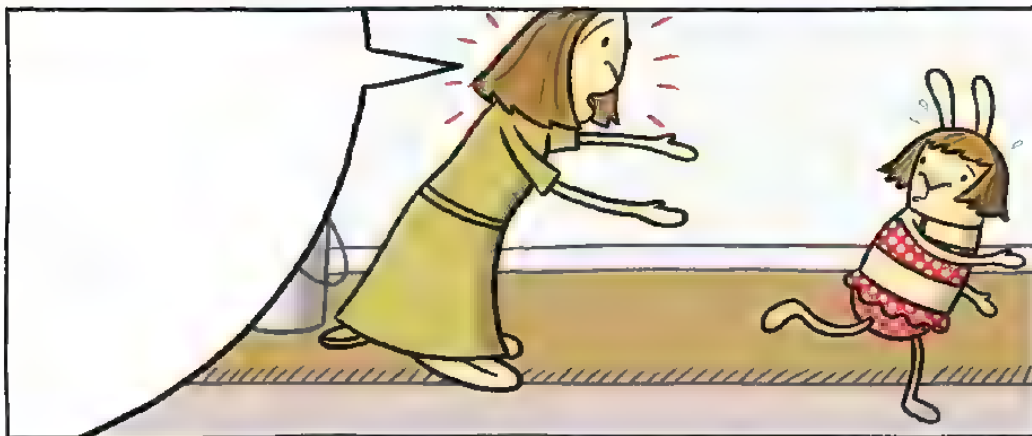


I stay close to Mama, no matter where she is.



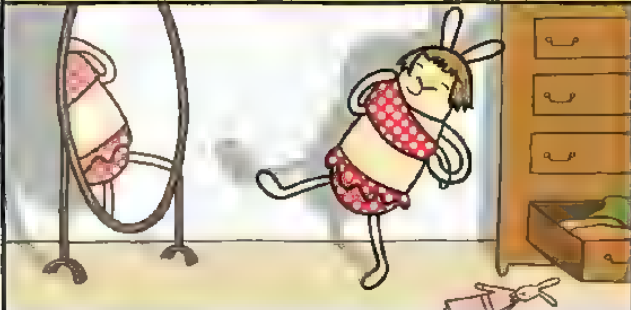
But suddenly, I lose her.



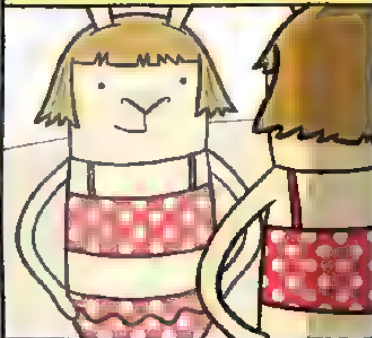


two

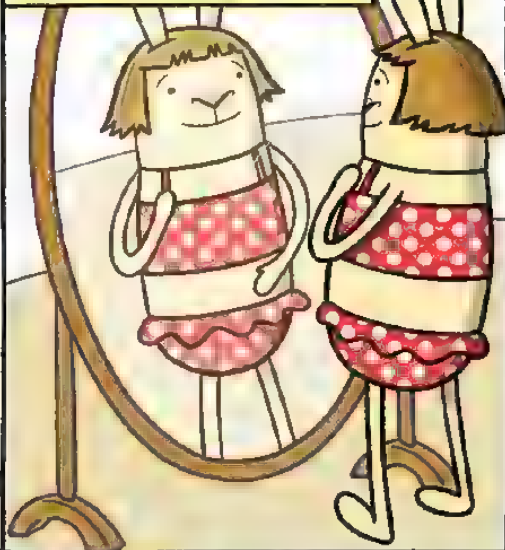
It's been two weeks since the hospital. Just because I can't hear good doesn't mean I can't look good.



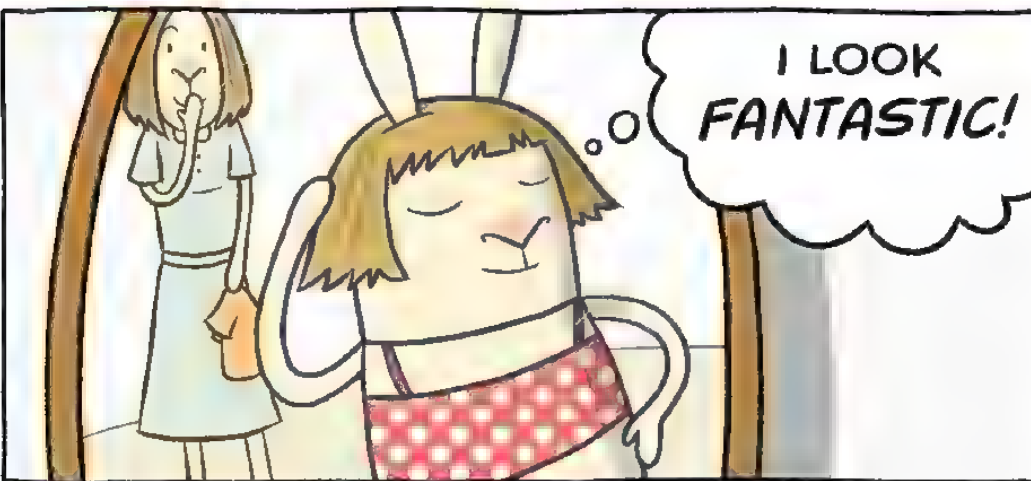
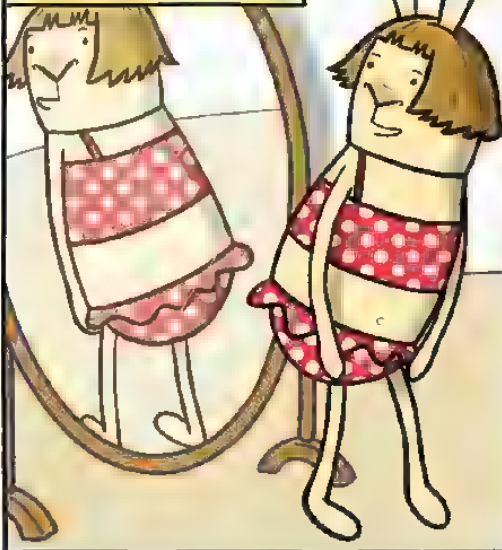
I love my bathing suit.

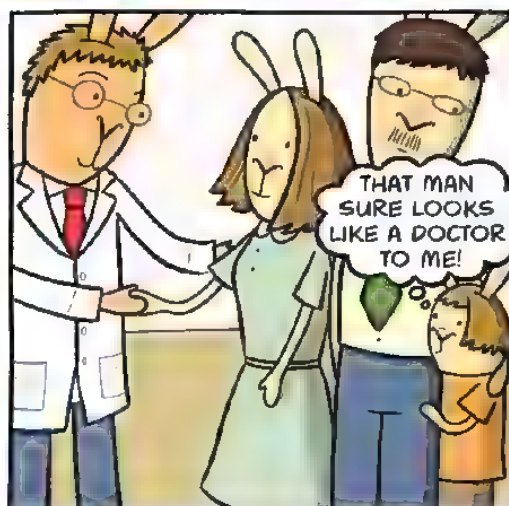
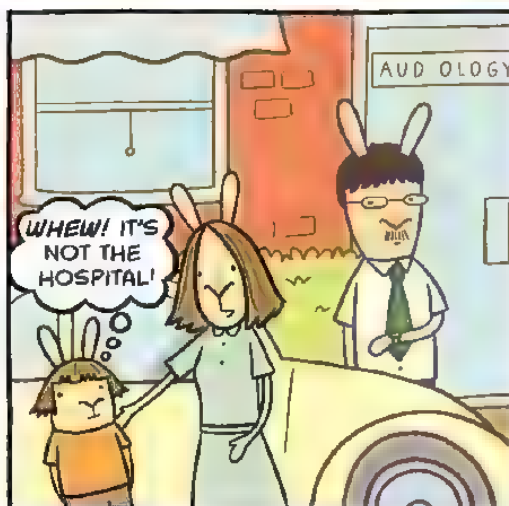
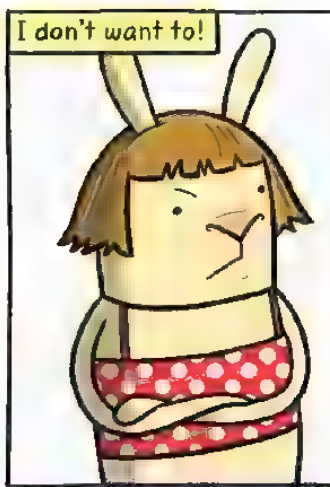


I wear it—and nothing else—



every day, everywhere.



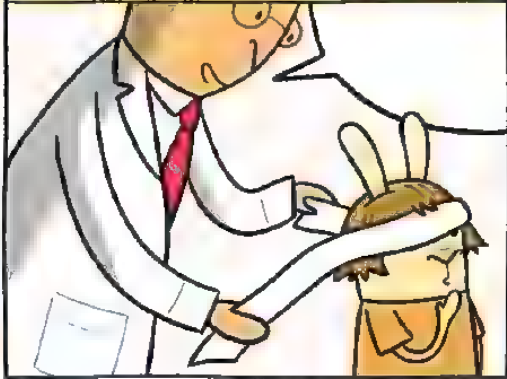


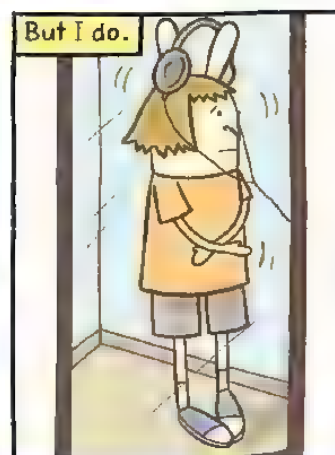
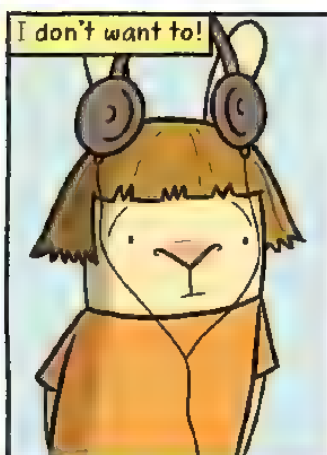
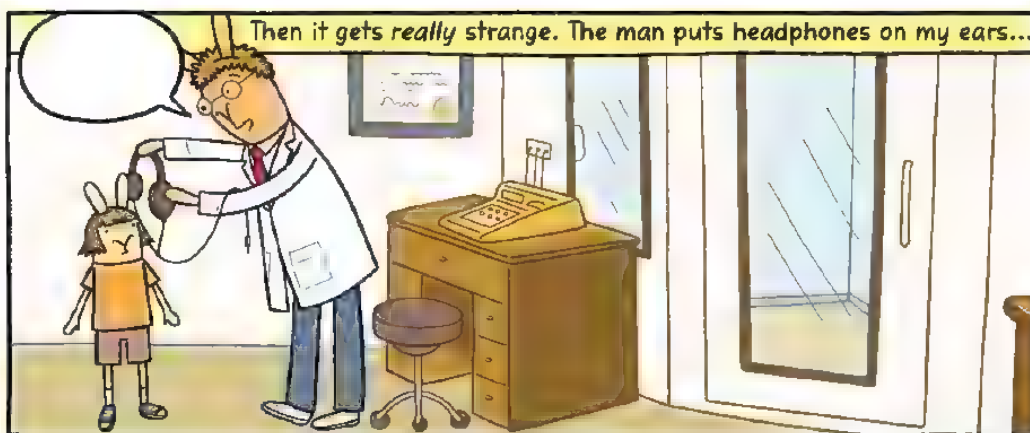


The man who isn't a doctor but looks like one shows me a big bell...



...and then he puts a blindfold on me.





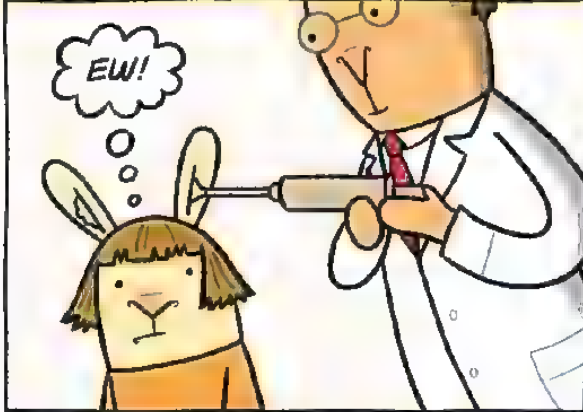
An amazing thing happens inside the booth: I hear a beep! A real beep! It's the first sound I've heard since the hospital. And then I hear something that sounds sort of like talking, but it's all *weird*.



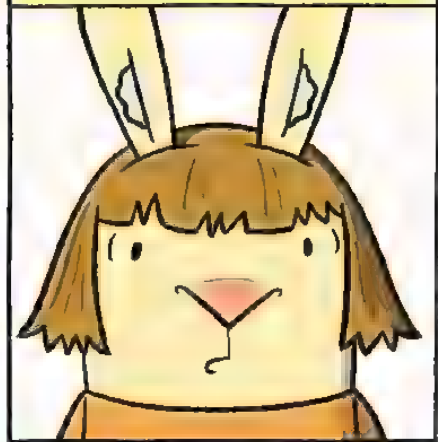




Then the man squirts some goop into each of my ears...



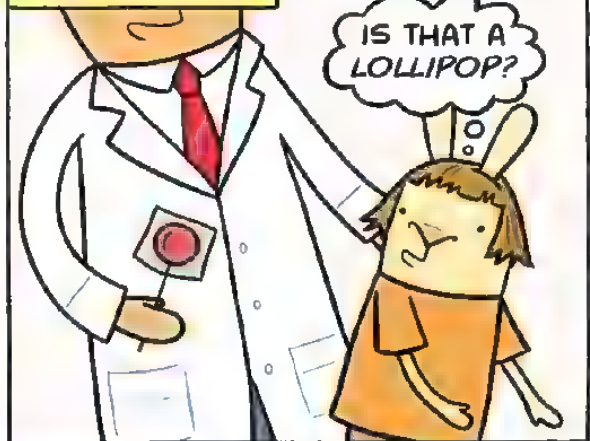
...and I wait...and I wait and wait...

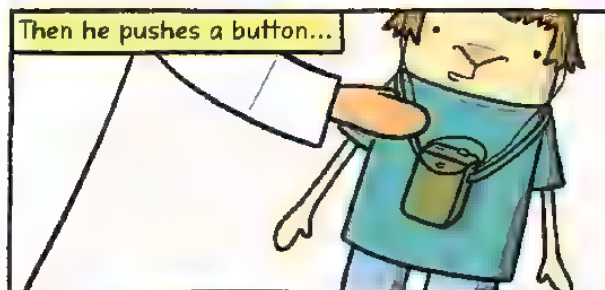
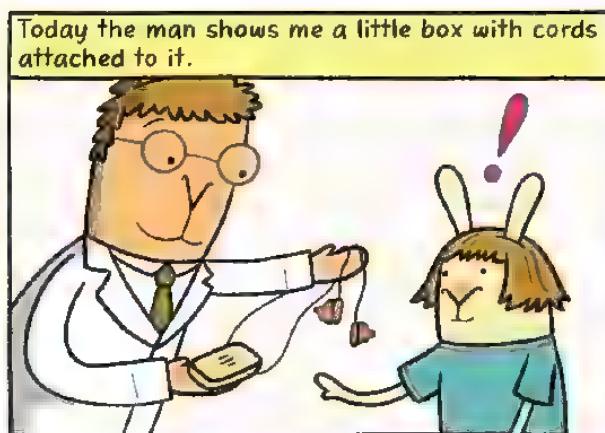


...until the man pulls the firmed-up goop out of my ears.

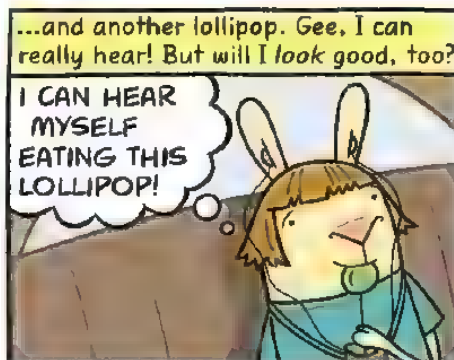
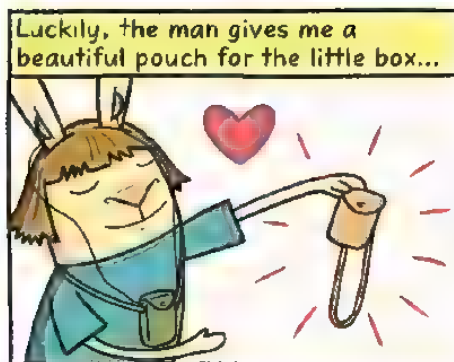
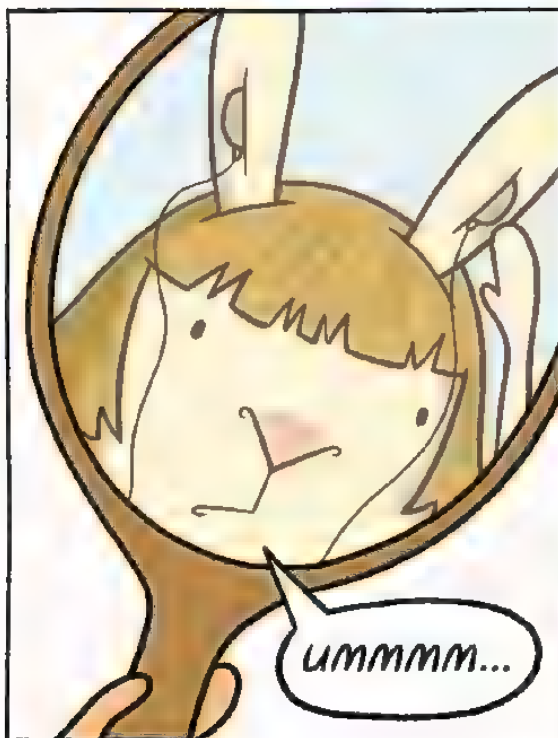
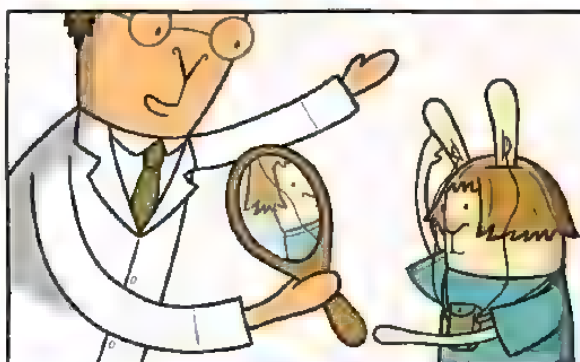
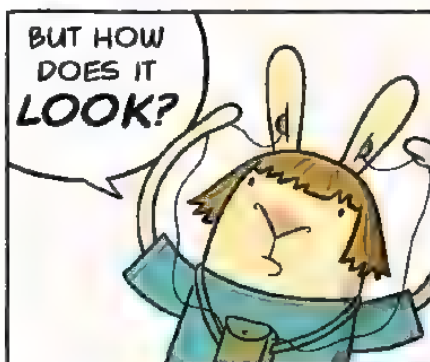


And then we're done.







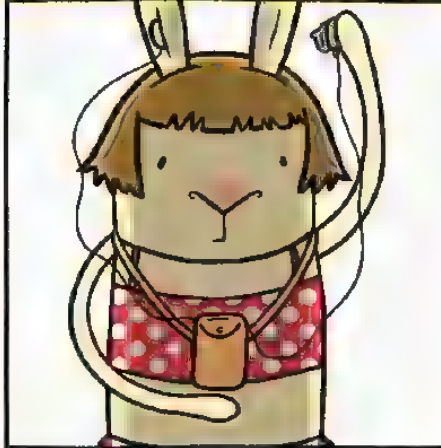




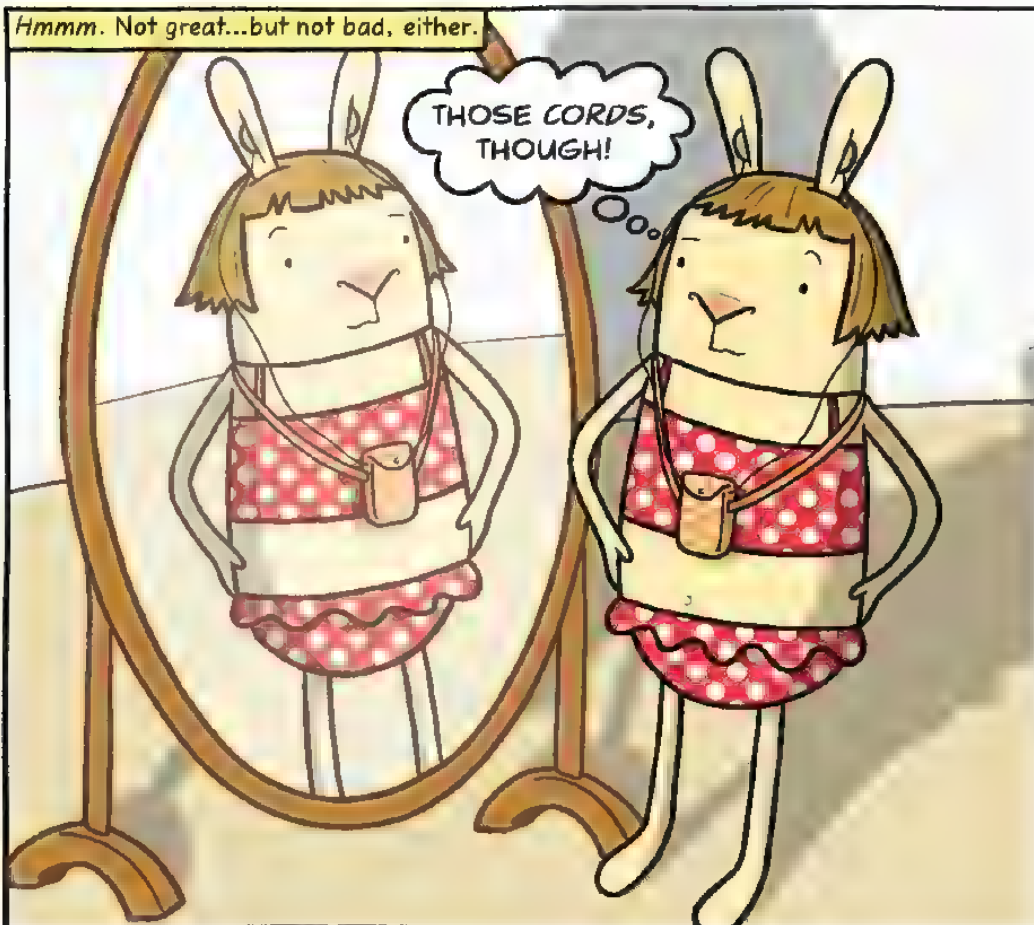
When I get home, I put my bathing suit back on, and I put the little box into the cute pouch.



I strap the whole thing on. I put the ear globs in my ears, and I look in the mirror.

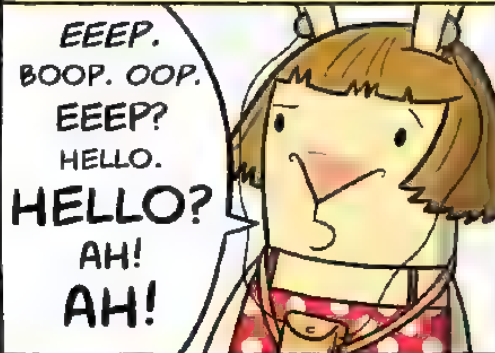


Hmmm. Not great...but not bad, either.

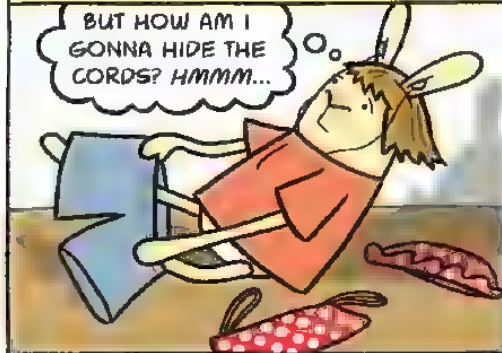


three

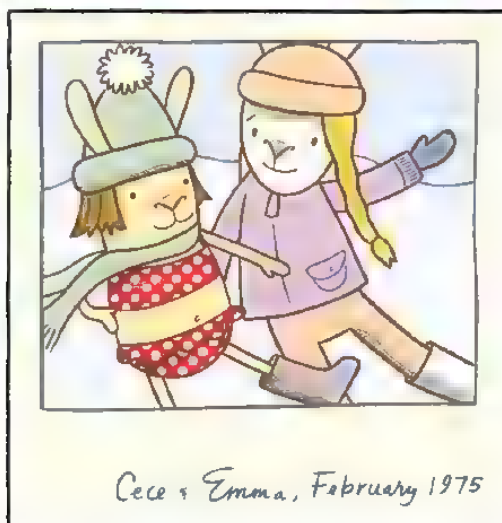
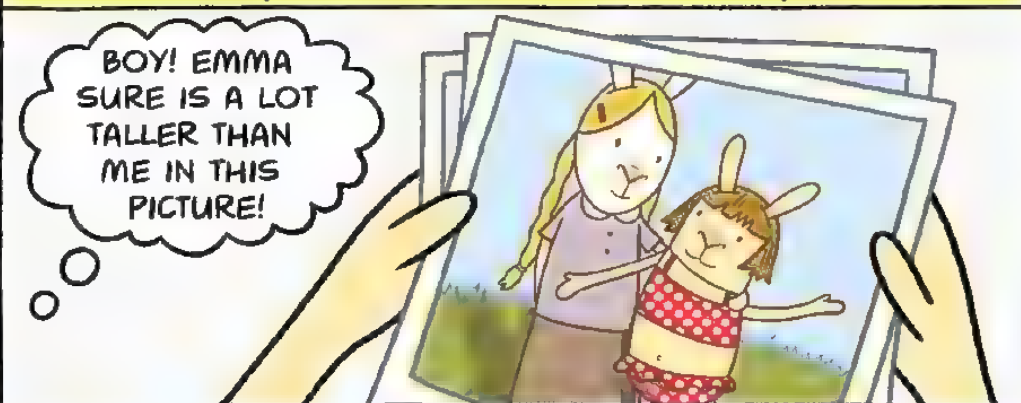
I find out that the little box is called a "hearing aid." It's hard to get used to. Everything sounds funny when I use it. Even me!



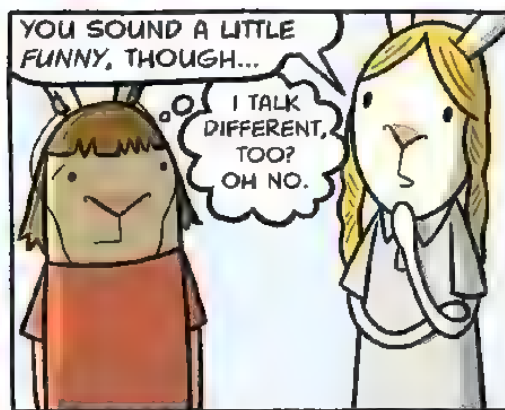
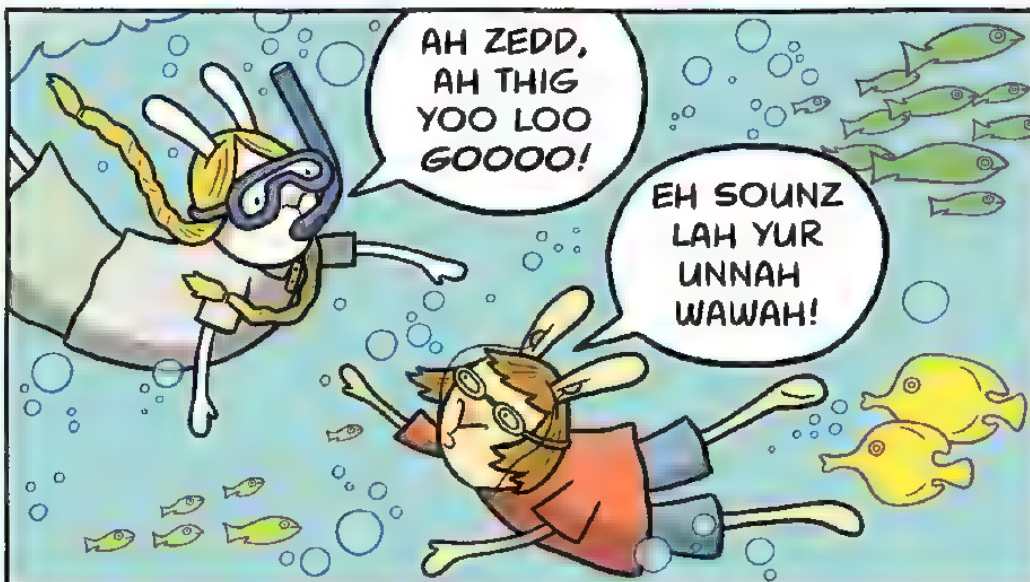
I don't like the way my hearing aid looks, either, so I cover it up with some "real" clothes. I'm going to visit my friend Emma today. I haven't seen her since I got sick.



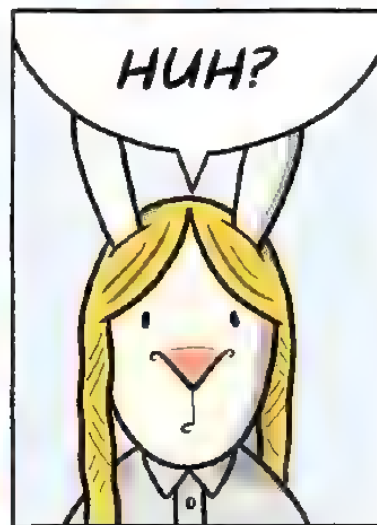
Emma and I have always looked different from each other, but in ways that didn't matter.



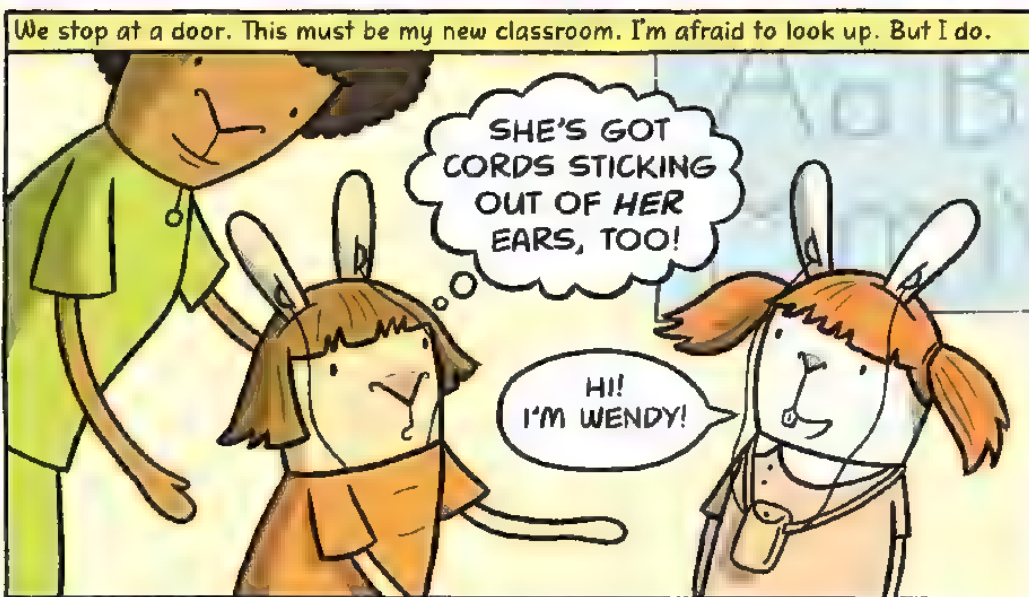
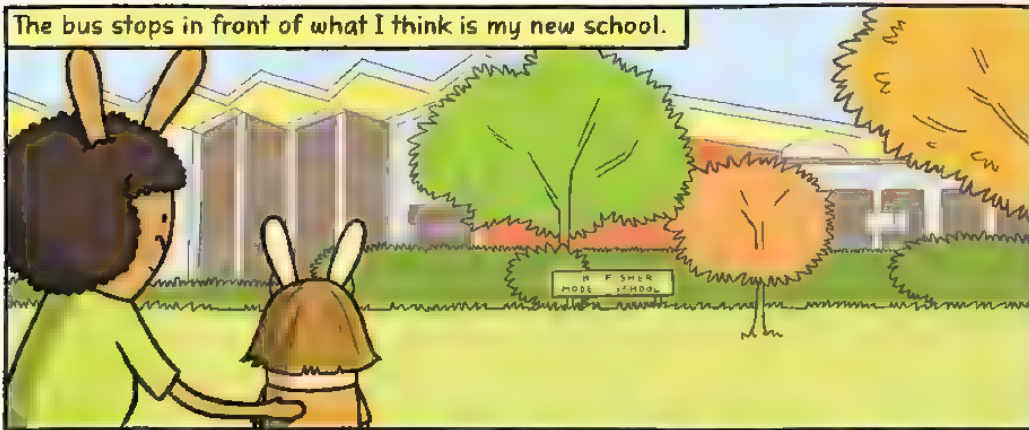
And now? Now we look a lot different, and in a way that does matter. To me, at least.









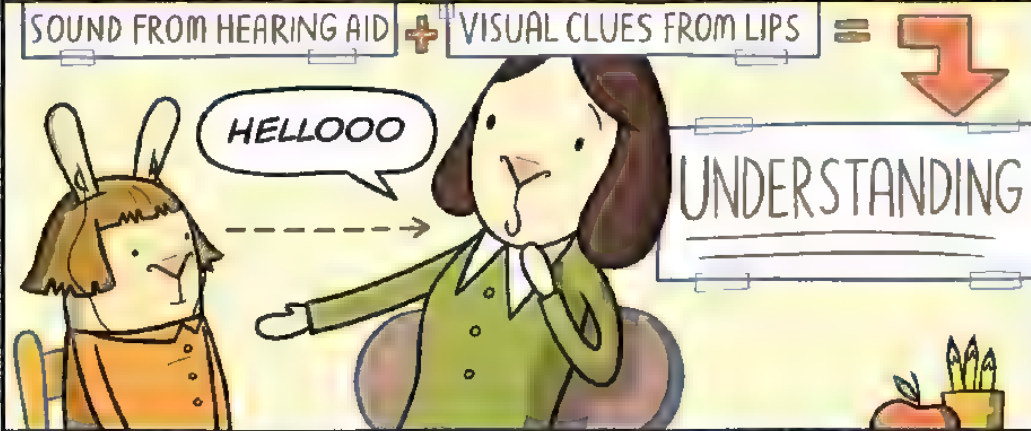




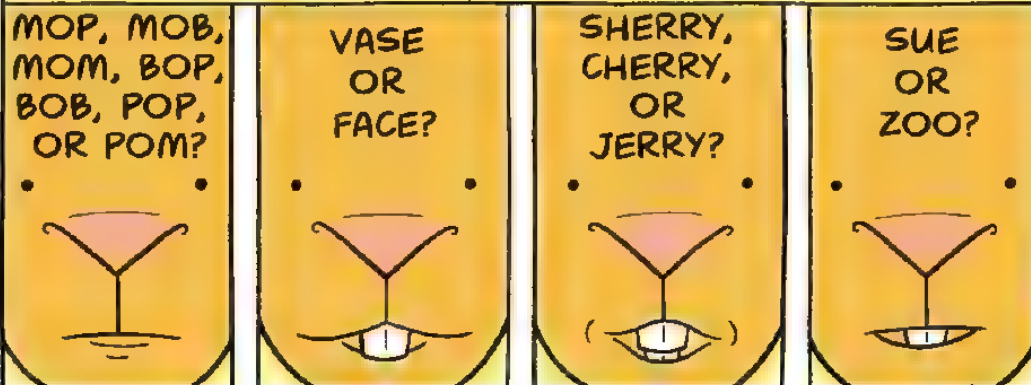




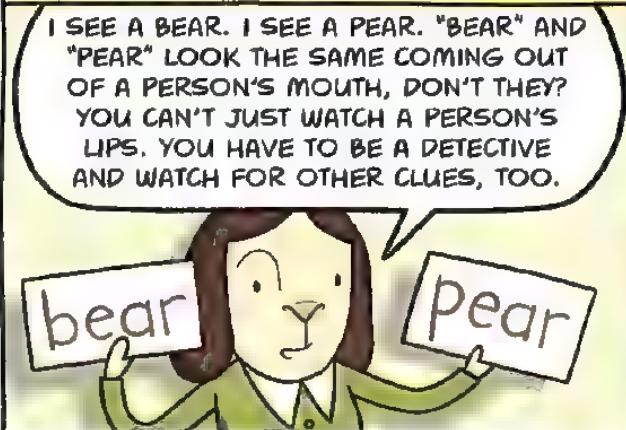
But Dorn also tries to teach us how to lip-read. She says that lip-reading is watching people's mouths move when they talk, so we can understand them better.

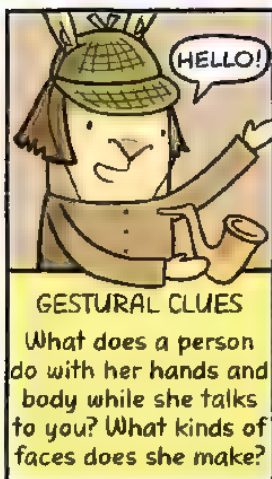


But this gets tricky, because many words sound similar and people's lips look the same when they are saying them:



Dorn explains how we're going to figure out what people might be saying.



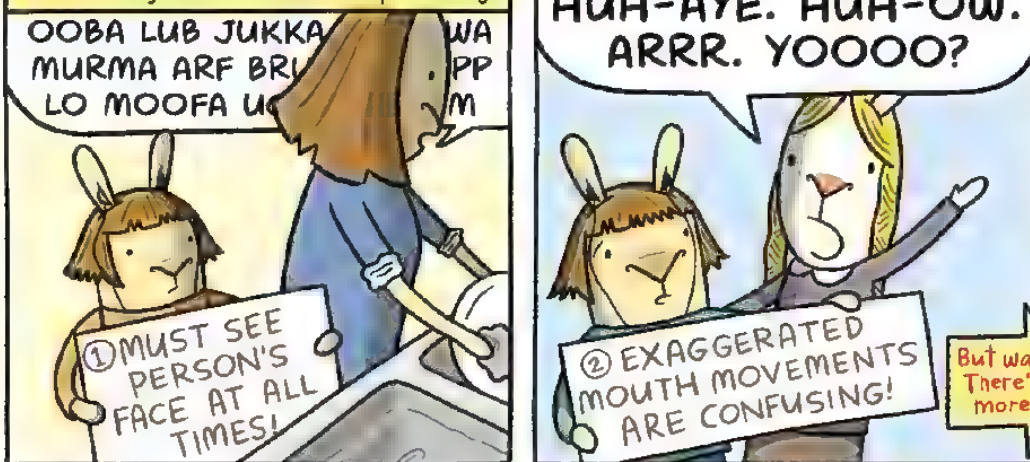




So Dorn encourages us to practice at home.



I make many discoveries about lip-reading:



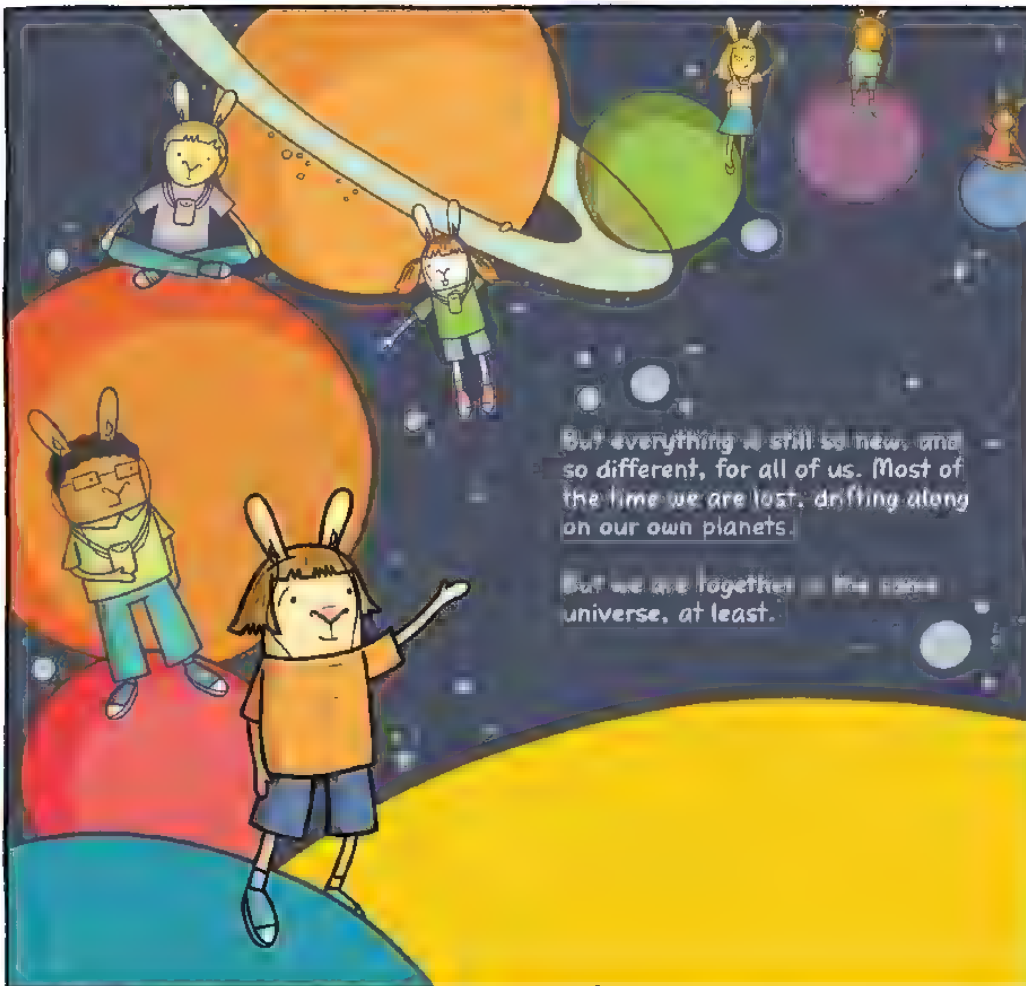
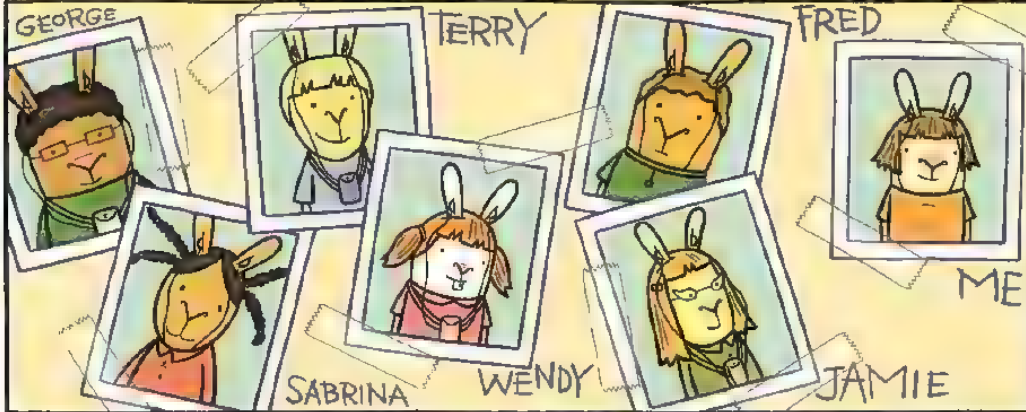
But wait!  
There's more!



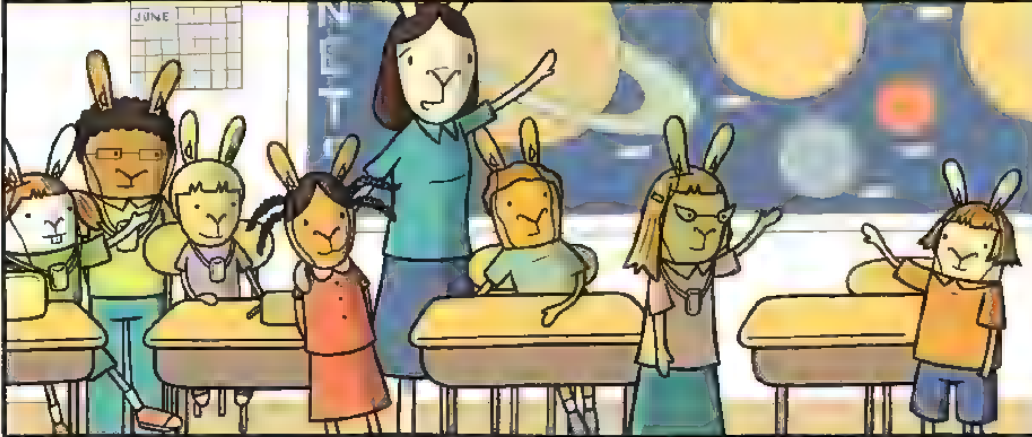




George, Sabrina, Terry, Wendy, Fred, and Jamie: they understand. Because they are just like me.



Suddenly, summer is here again. When I say good-bye to my friends at Fisher School, I do not realize that I will never again be surrounded by kids who are just like me.

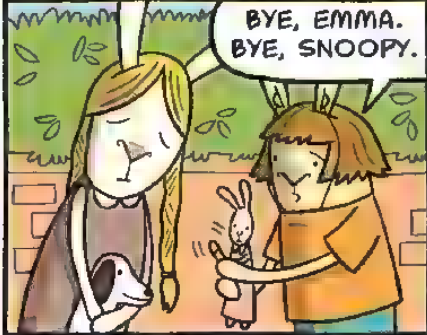


The next day, I'm back in the neighborhood with Emma.

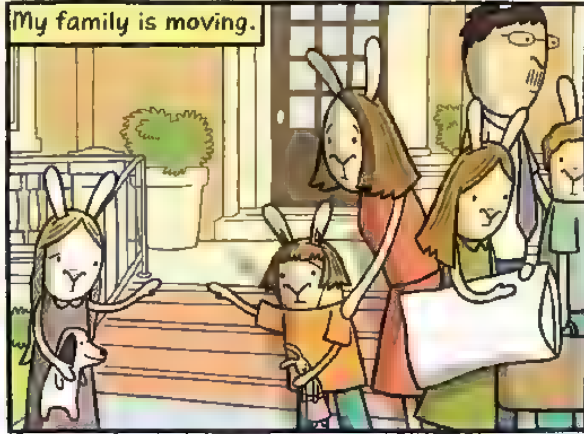


four

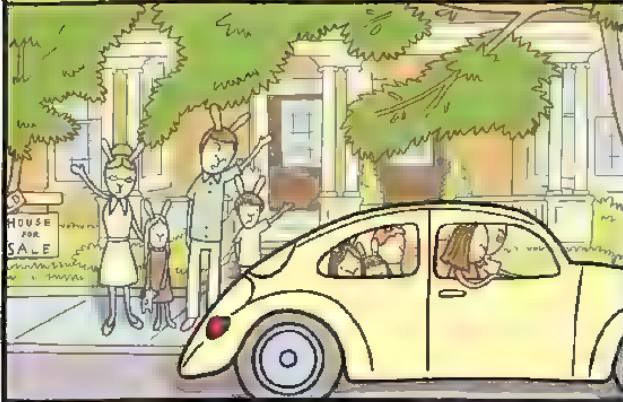
Soon after I say good-bye to my friends at Fisher School, I say good-bye to Emma, too.



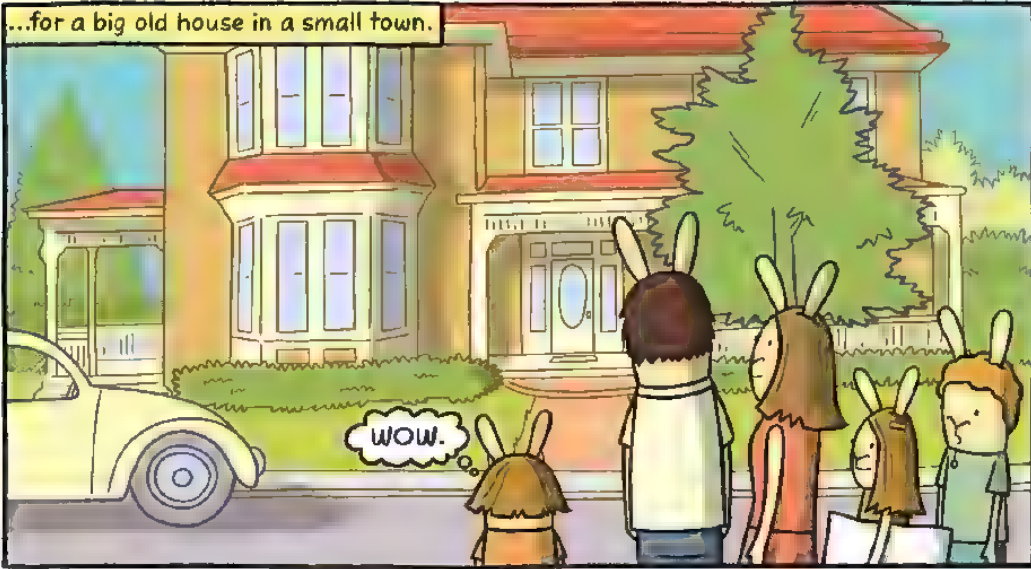
My family is moving.



We're leaving our small row house in the big city...

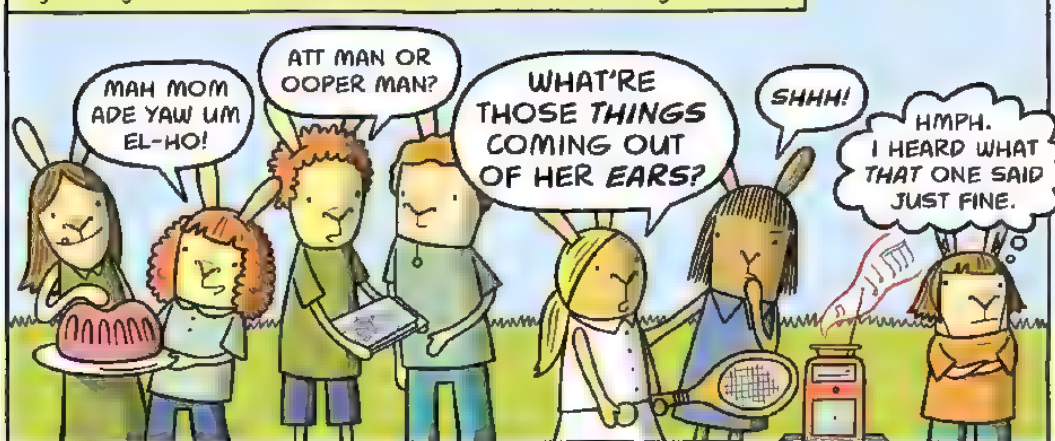


...for a big old house in a small town.





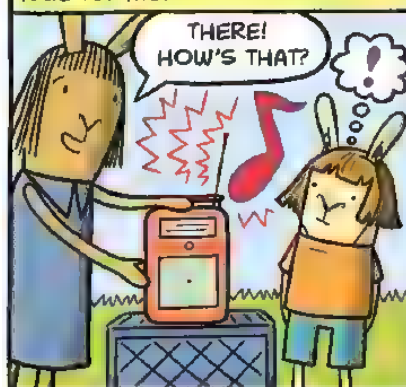
My siblings and I meet some of the kids in our new neighborhood.



And I soon discover that these neighborhood kids are crazy about their radio!



One of the kids tries to be nice and turns up the radio super loud for me.

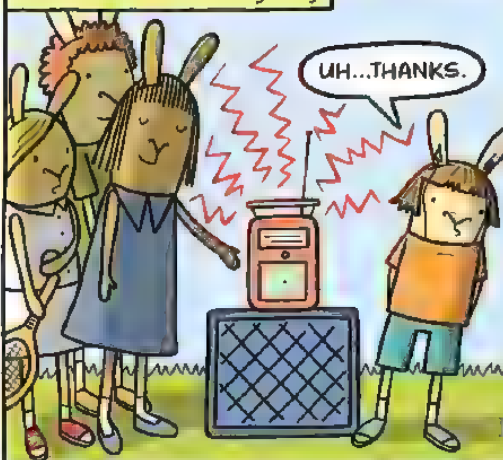


Here's what I wish I could say:

THANKS, BUT I CAN HEAR THE RADIO WITH MY HEARING AID JUST FINE! I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT, BECAUSE I CAN'T SEE THE FACES OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE SINGING AND TALKING!

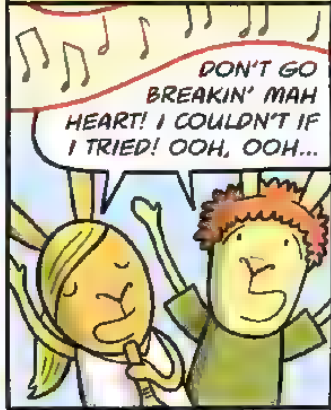


Here's what I actually say:





So, the neighborhood kids sing along with the songs...



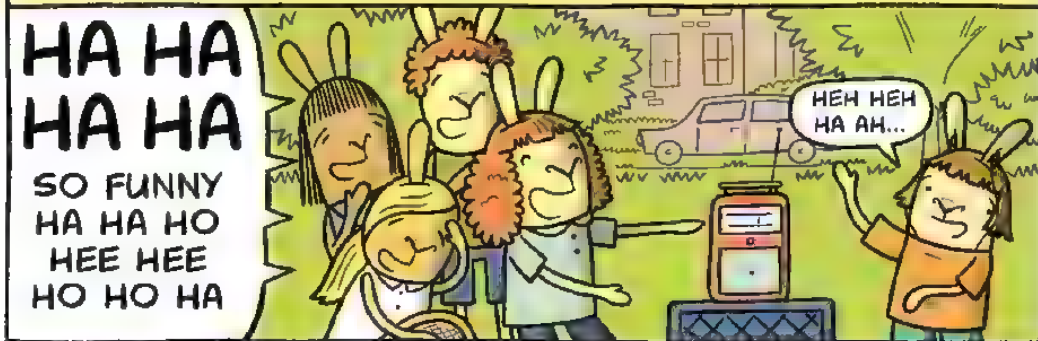
...and they laugh along with whoever is talking...



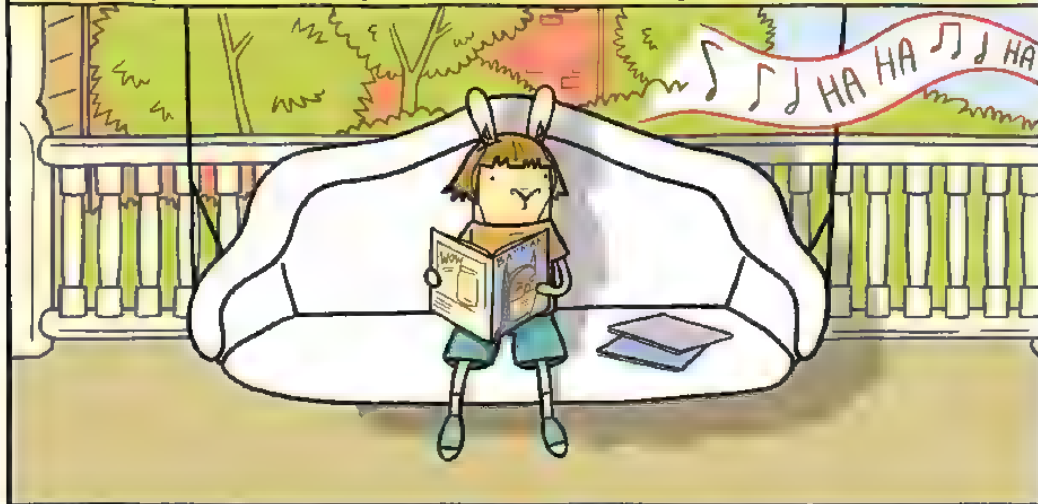
...and it all sounds like a foreign language to me.

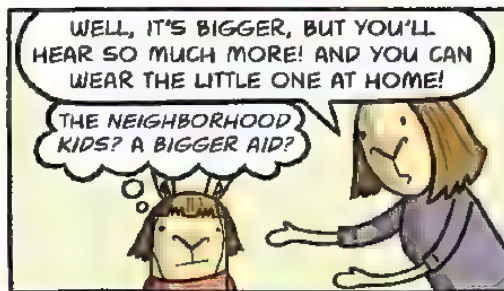


The person on the radio says something...the kids laugh some more. And this time, so do I. But what about?



I can't explain it, but it's not just the radio situation that is making me feel so lonely in this new place. It's a feeling that lasts all summer long.

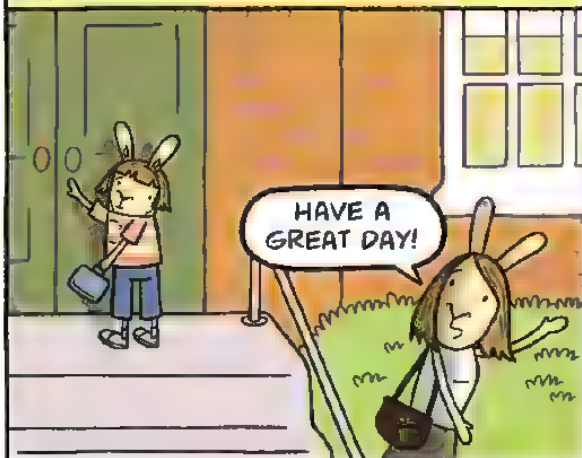




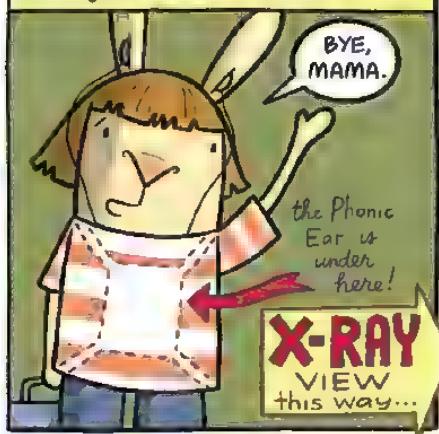
Mom walks me to school on the first day. We've been here once before, and I already know where my classroom is. But I'm still scared.

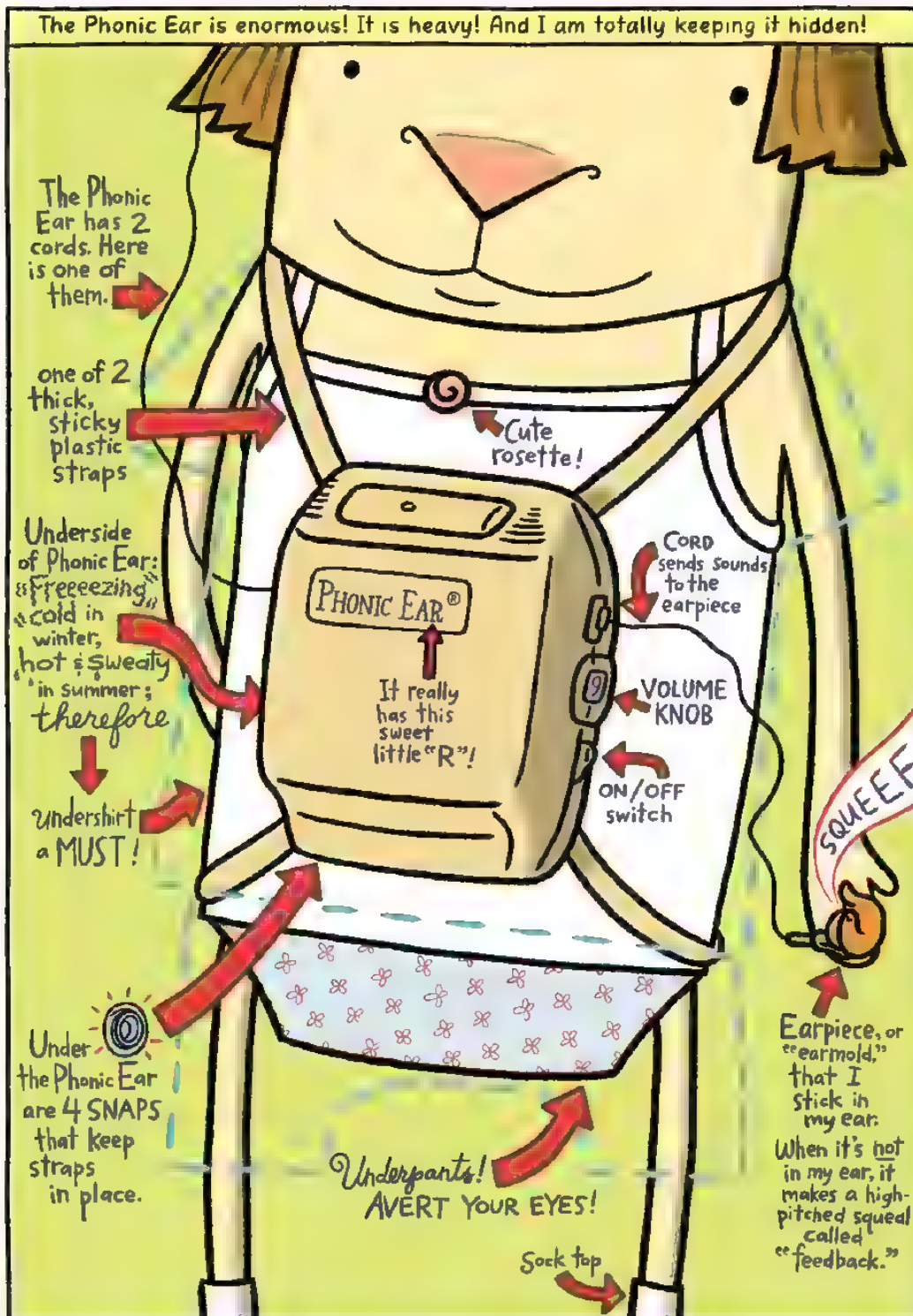


I wear my favorite striped shirt. And underneath that shirt...



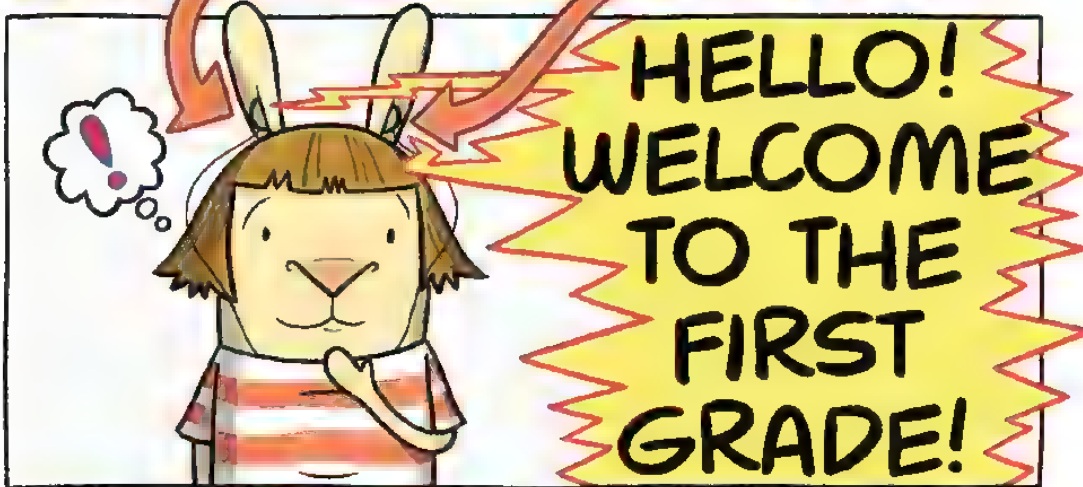
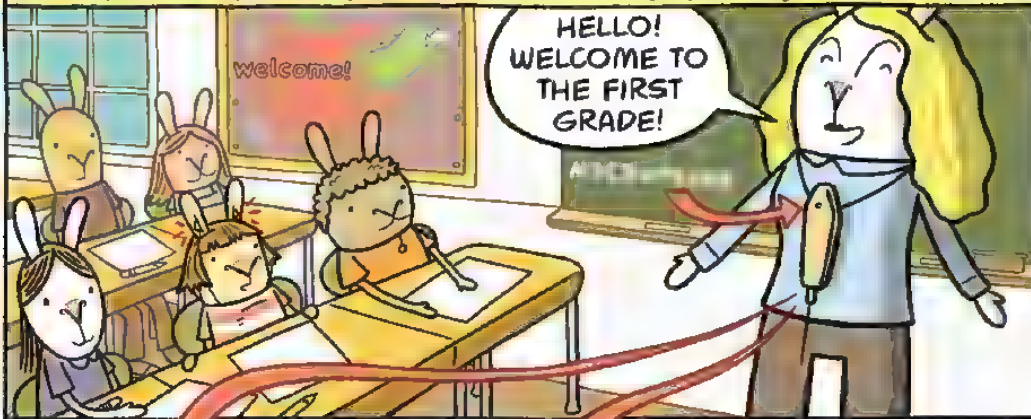
...well hidden, I hope, is my brand-new, superpowerful, just-for-school hearing aid: The Phonic Ear.







The Phonic Ear is paired with a microphone that my teacher, Mrs. Lufton, is supposed to wear. When Mrs. Lufton speaks into the microphone, it sends signals to the Phonic Ear. These signals end up sounding like Mrs. Lufton is talking right in my ear!



Mom was right! The Phonic Ear makes Mrs. Lufton's voice louder, just for me. It even clarifies her voice—really sharpens it! Even when I don't see Mrs. Lufton's face, I understand every word she says without having to lip-read at all.





The Phonic Ear is really powerful! I can hear Mrs. Lufton wherever she is in the entire classroom—and I can totally understand her, even if I can't see her.

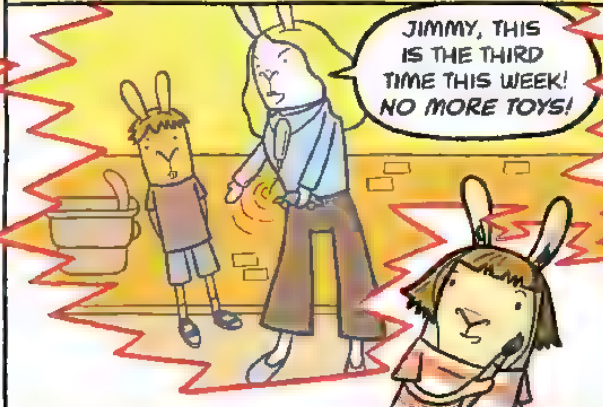


I soon discover that I can hear Mrs. Lufton wherever she is in the entire school building.

**HELLO, PRINCIPAL ECKHART! IT'S SO NICE TO BE OUT OF MY CLASSROOM FOR A BIT!**



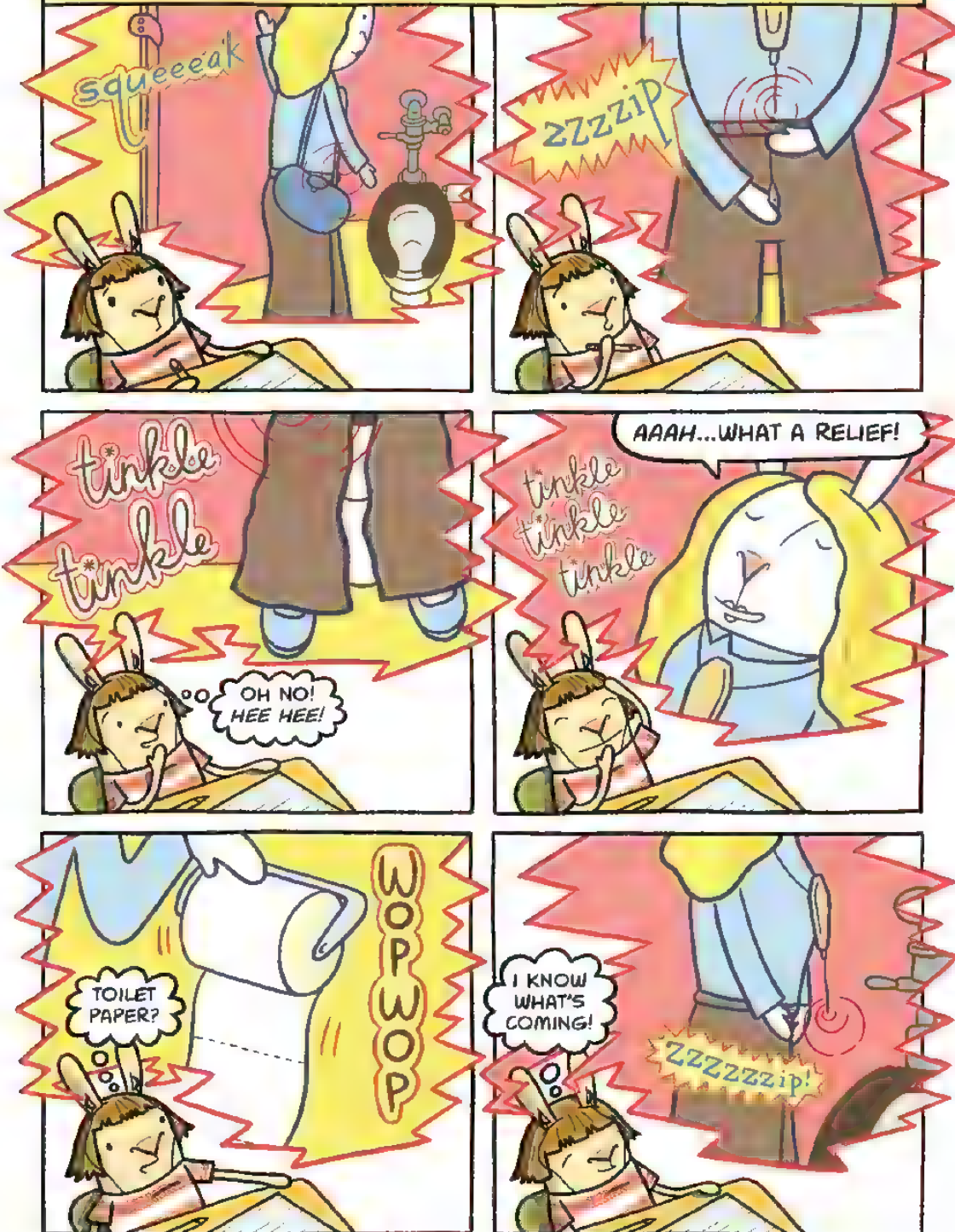
I can hear her fussing at a classmate in the hallway right outside the classroom door!

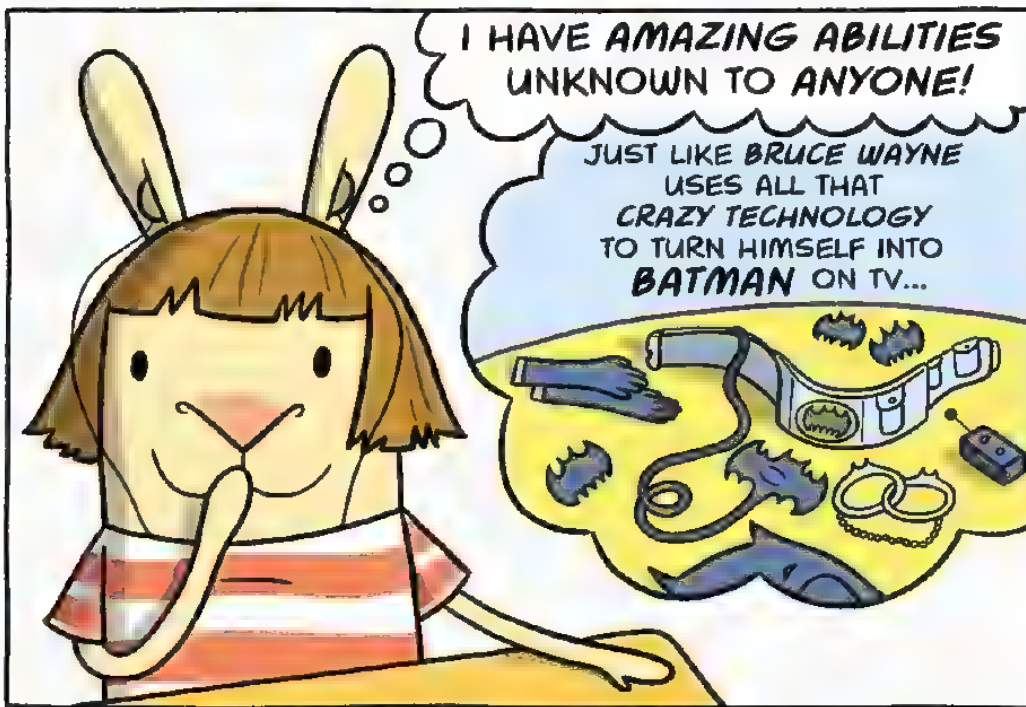


The microphone even picks up other people's voices! I can hear Mrs. Lufton and the other teachers all the way in the teachers' lounge!



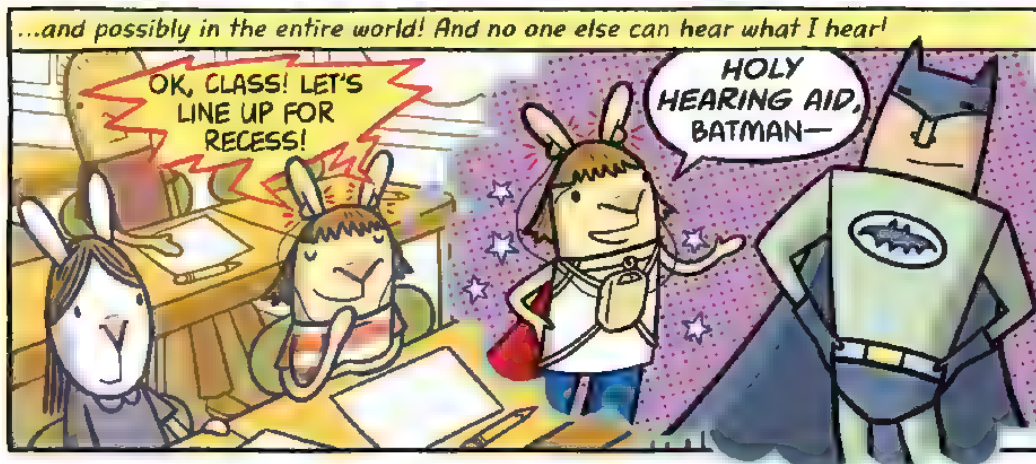
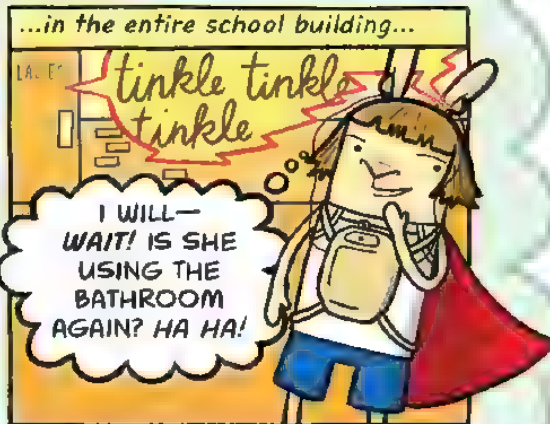
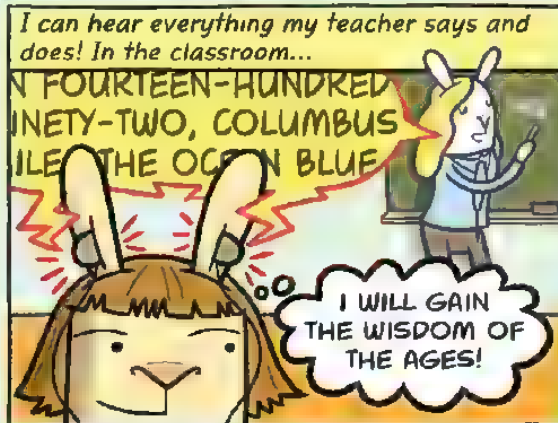
Best—or worst—of all, I can even hear Mrs. Lufton when she USES THE BATHROOM!



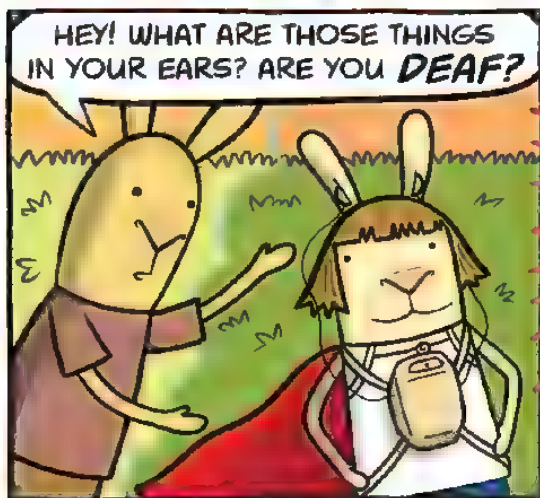




...I CAN USE MY OWN CRAZY TECHNOLOGY—THE PHONIC EAR—TO  
TURN MYSELF INTO A SUPERHERO, TOO! MY POWER? SUPER HEARING!







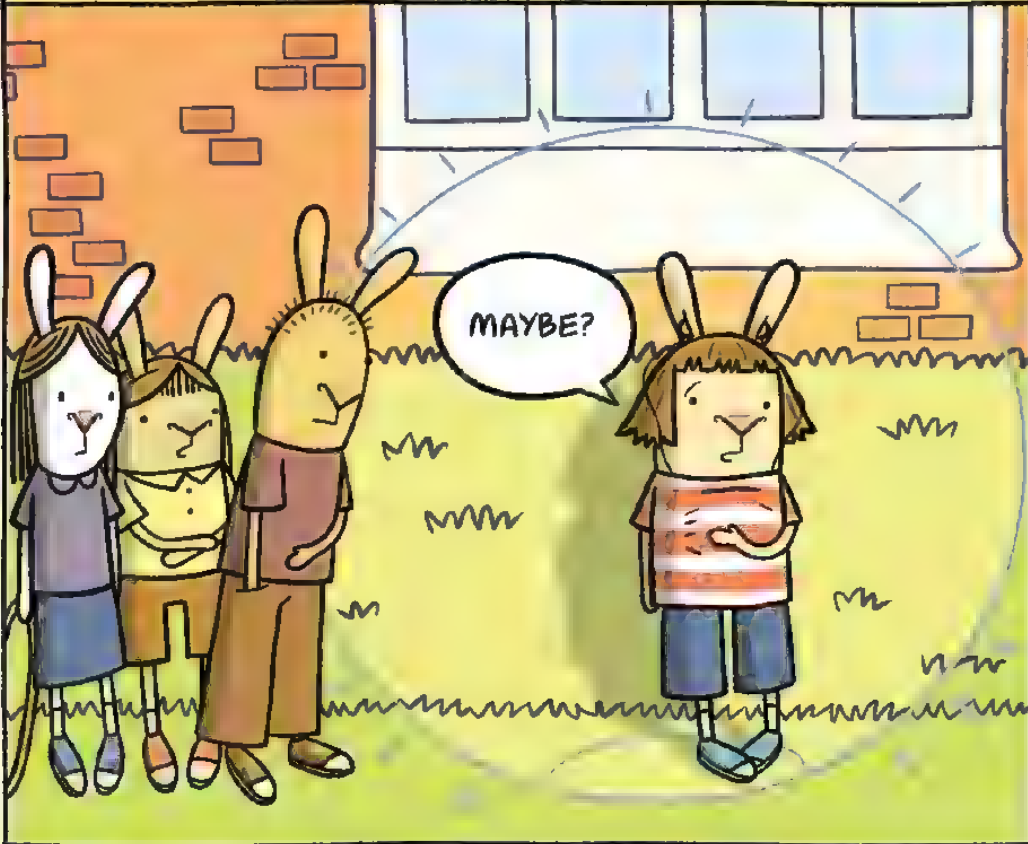
Superheroes might be awesome, but they are also different.



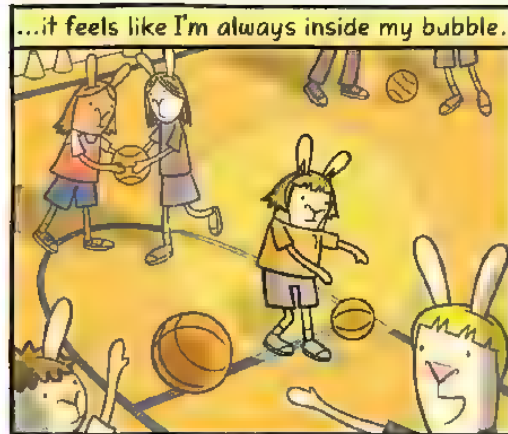
And being different feels a lot like being alone.



With the Phonic Ear, I have super hearing. Without it, I can't hear. Am I deaf?



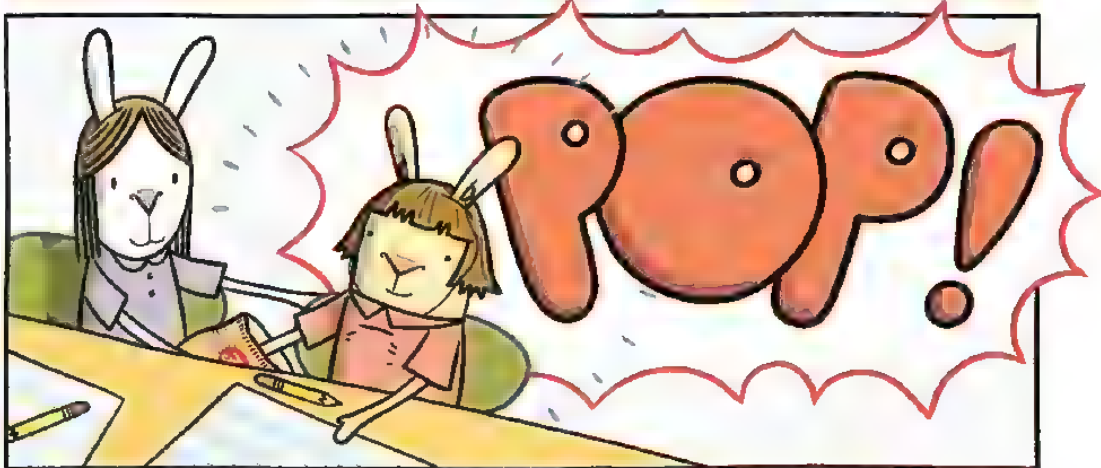
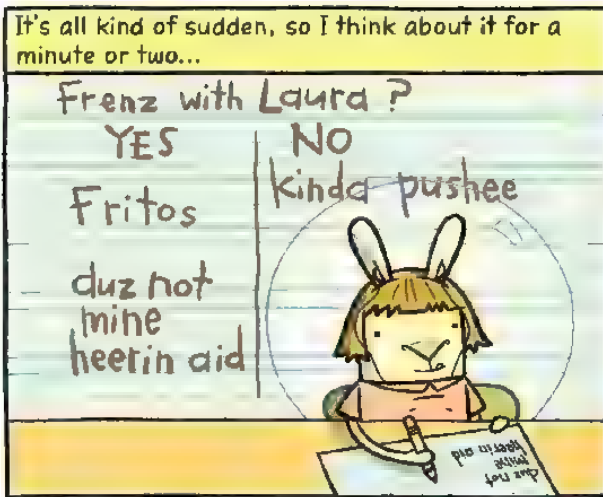
five









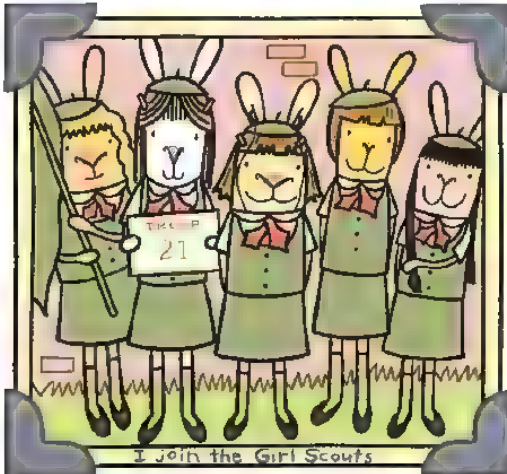
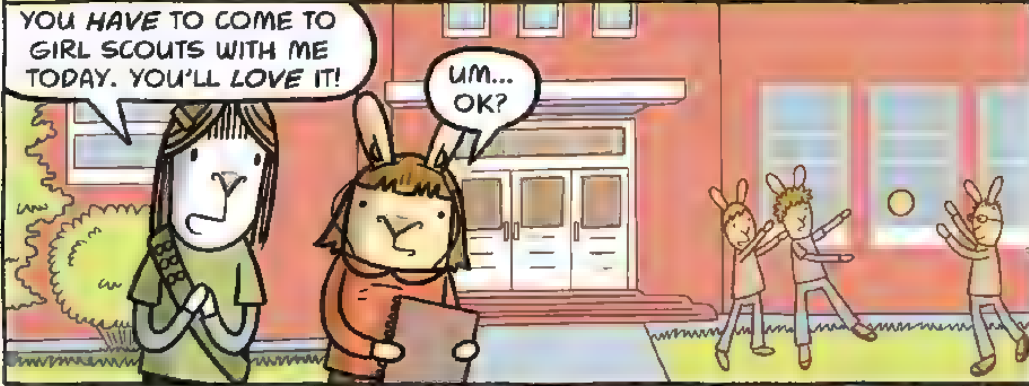




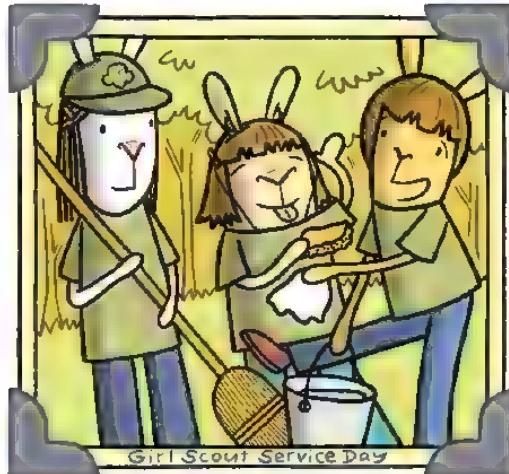
Being best friends with Laura isn't perfect, but it sure beats being in the bubble. We stay best friends all through first grade, and we're still best friends during second grade. One day after school, Laura says:

YOU HAVE TO COME TO GIRL SCOUTS WITH ME TODAY. YOU'LL LOVE IT!

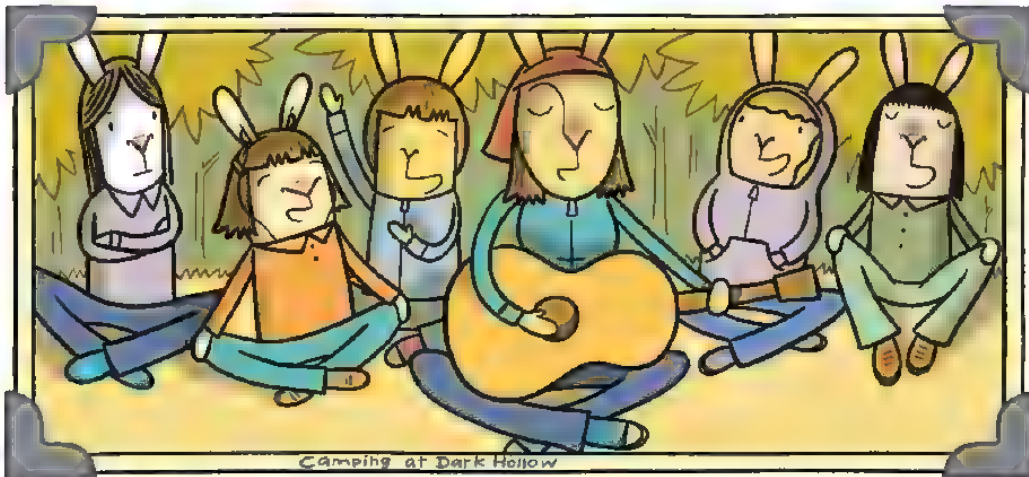
UM... OK?



I join the Girl Scouts



Girl Scout Service Day

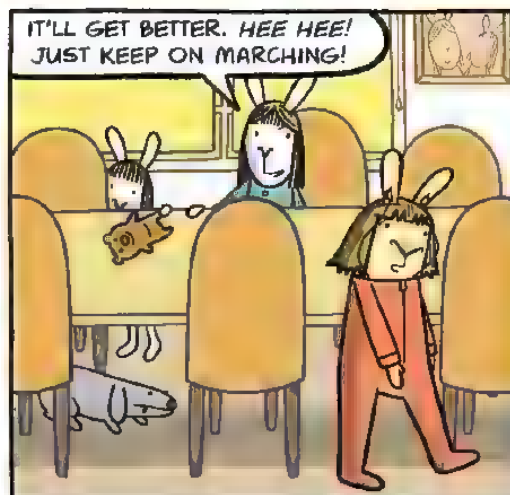
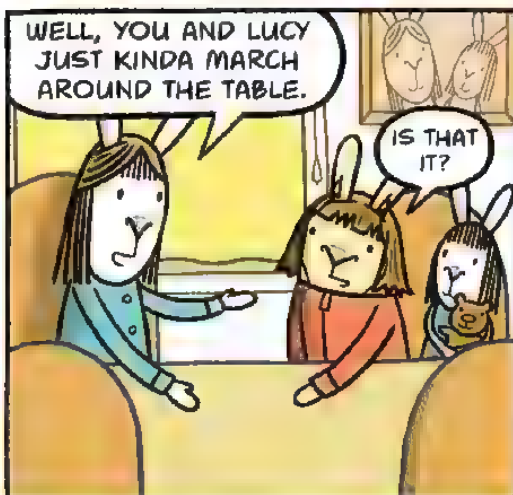
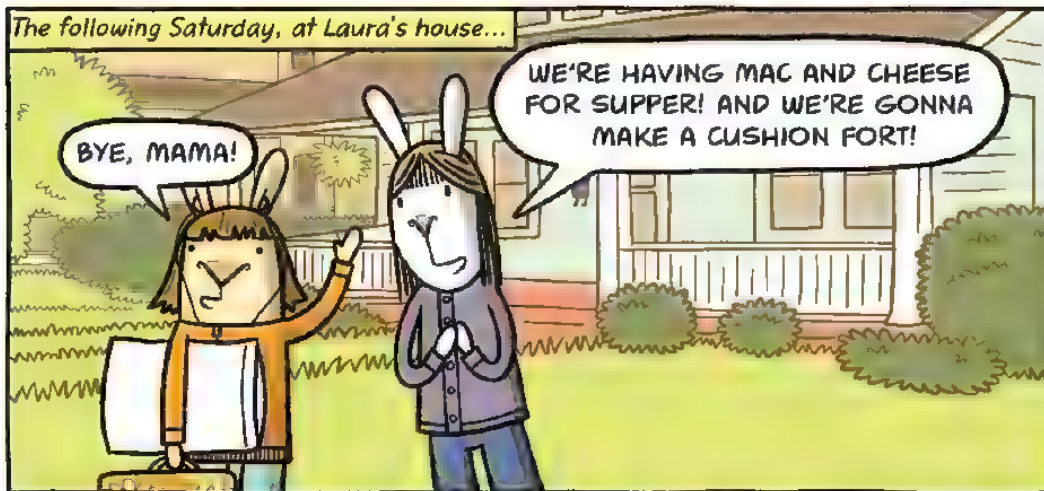


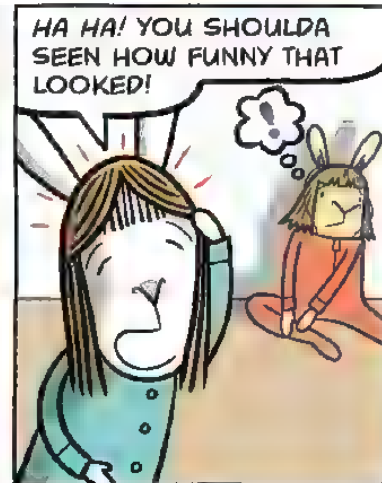
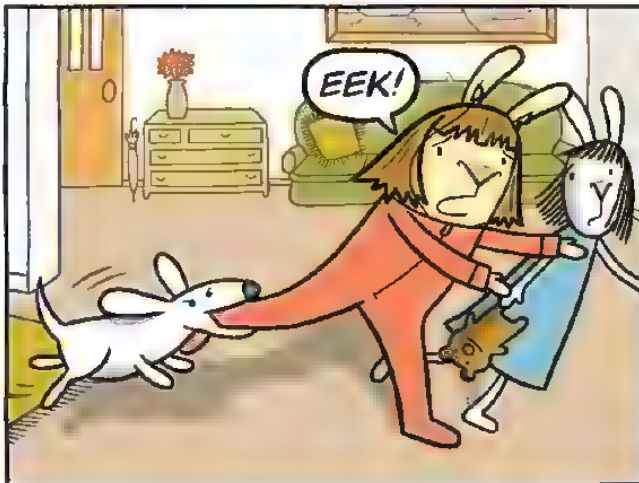
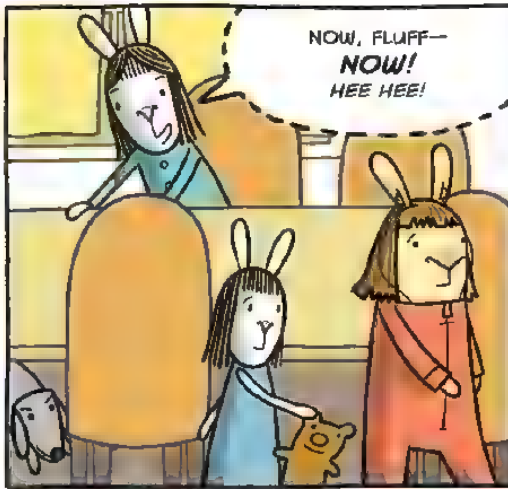
Camping at Dark Hollow

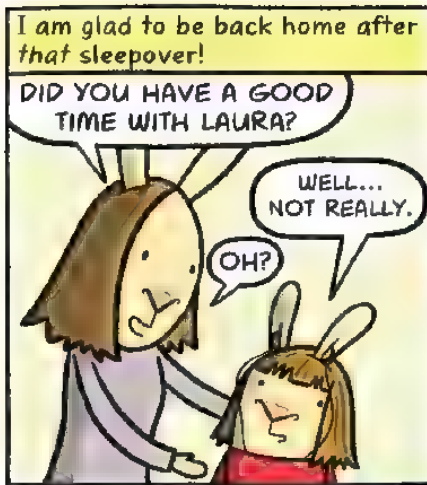




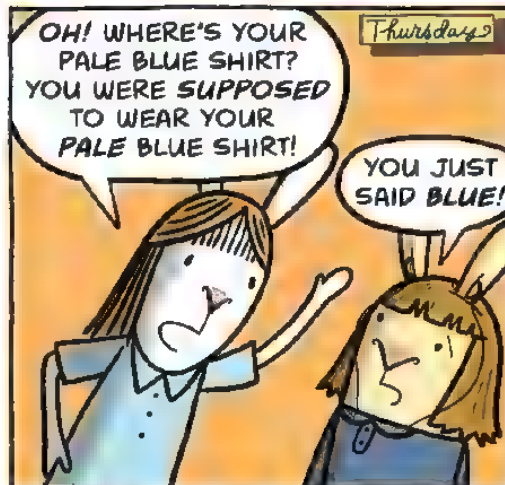
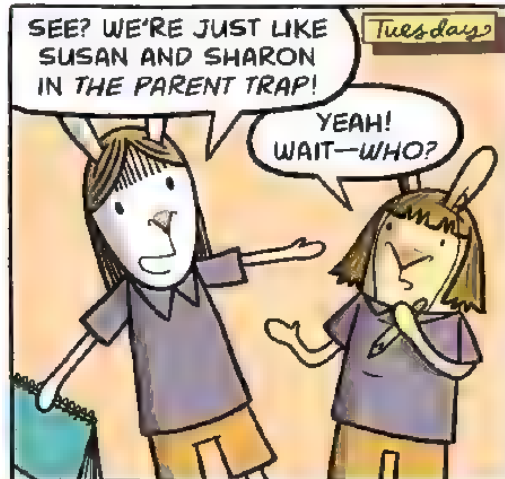
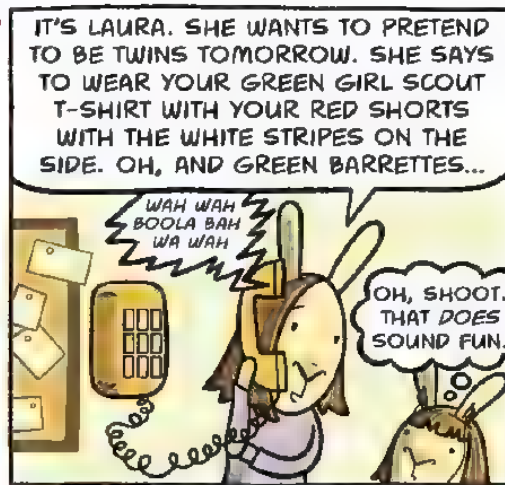




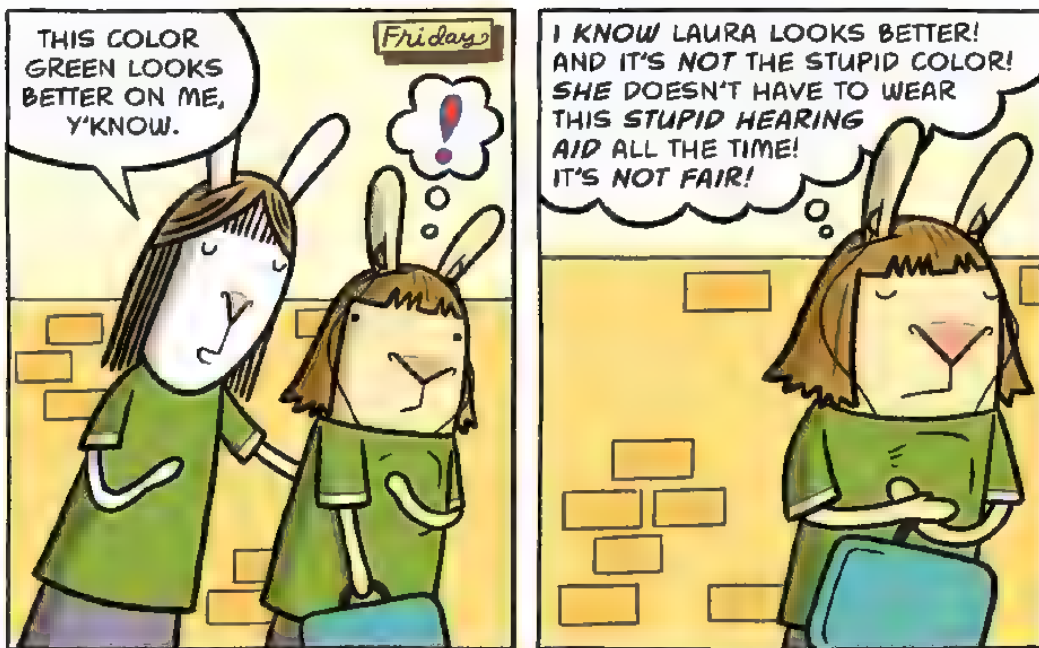




RING RING









Do I really want to spend any more nights with Laura?

| Yes                                | No                        |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Gave me Fritos in first grade   | 1. Very pushy.            |
| 2. Does not care about hearing aid | 2. Bad times              |
| 3. Good times.                     | 3. More bad times (Fluff) |
|                                    | 4. Twin stuff             |



It is nice that Laura really doesn't seem to notice or care about the hearing aid...



...but a familiar feeling has returned.

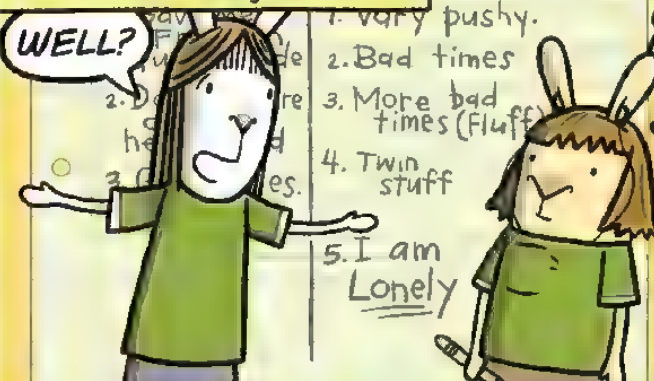
**WELL?**

|                           |
|---------------------------|
| 1. vary pushy.            |
| 2. Bad times              |
| 3. More bad times (Fluff) |
| 4. Twin stuff             |
| 5. I am <u>Lonely</u>     |

I THOUGHT BEING BEST FRIENDS WITH LAURA WOULD BE A GOOD THING...

...BUT NOW I'M JUST SO TIRED OF BEING PUSHED AROUND!

WHAT WOULD BATMAN DO?



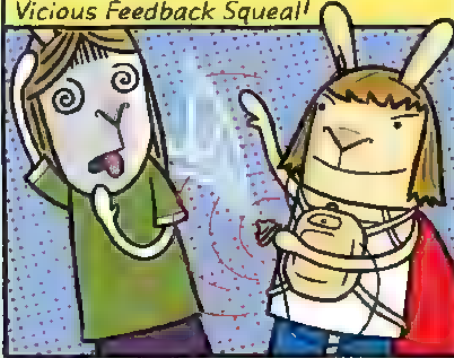
IT'S TIME TO PUSH BACK!



IT IS TIME TO PUSH BACK!



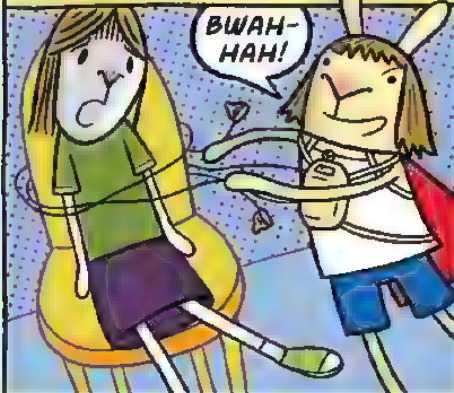
An evil smile crosses our hero's face as she hypnotizes Laura, aka Super Bossypants, with the Phonic Ear's Vicious Feedback Squeal!



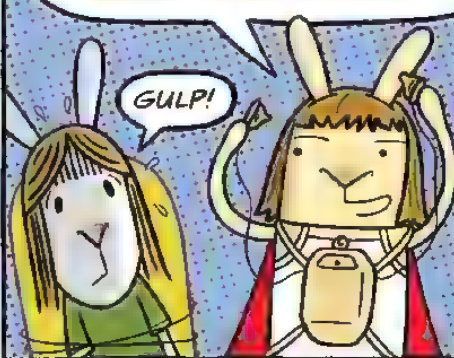
With the speed of light, our hero hurls the Earmolds of Virtue at Super Bossypants...



...and ties her up with the Cords of Intuition!



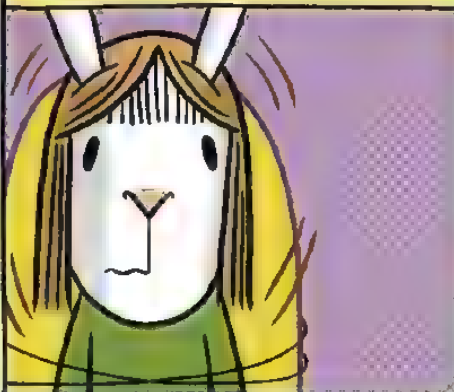
LUCKILY, I HAVE A SPARE SET OF MOLDS AND CORDS WITH WHICH TO HEAR YOUR FEAR!



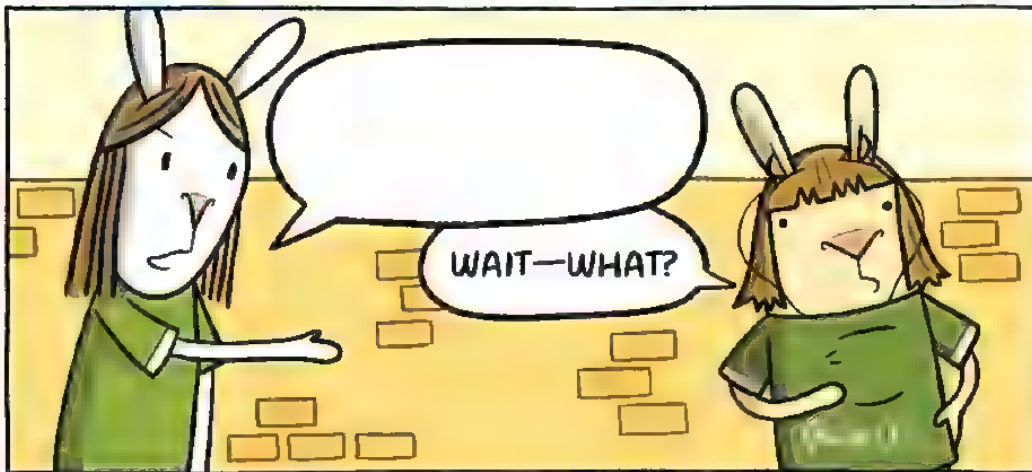
UNLEASH THE HOUND OF HORROR!



A dazed Super Bossypants shudders in terror when she realizes her fate!

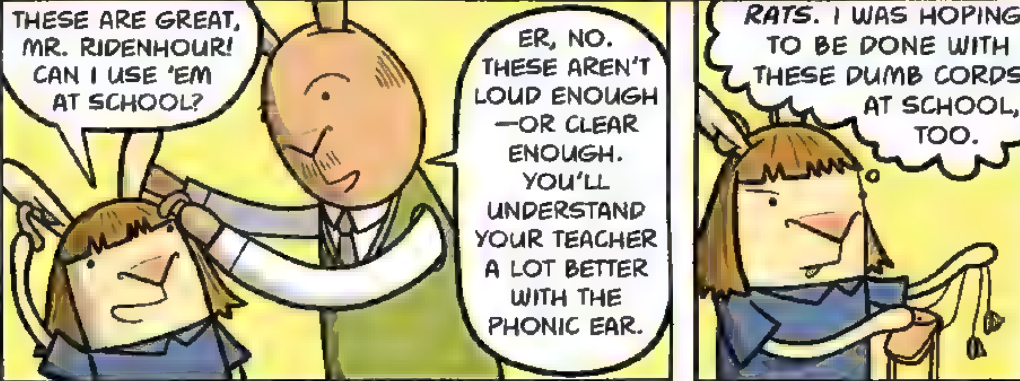


Luckily, the On/Off Switch of Awesomeness enables our hero to ignore Super Bossypants' pathetic pleas for help!

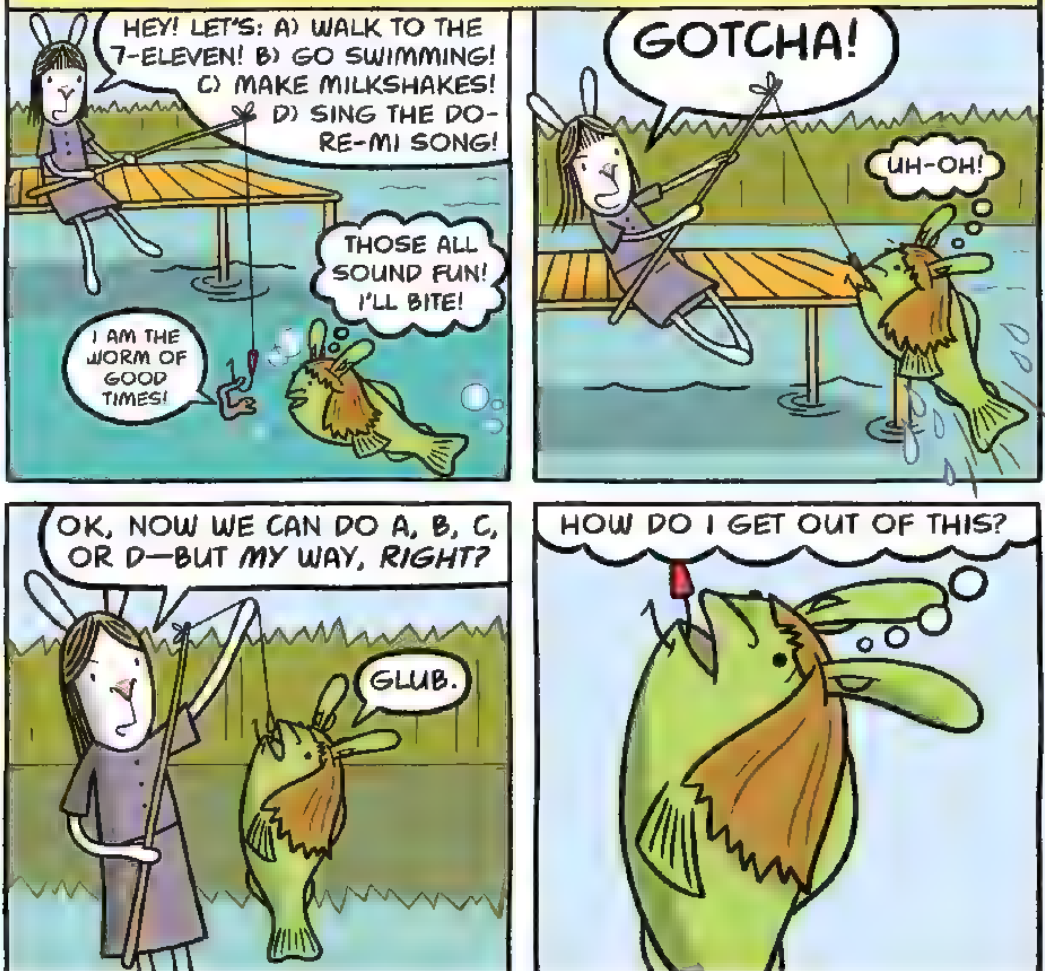


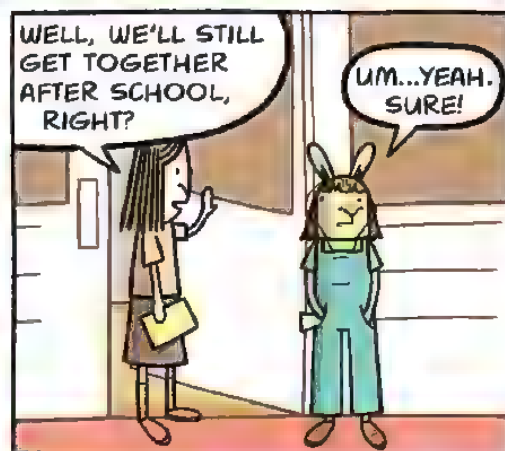
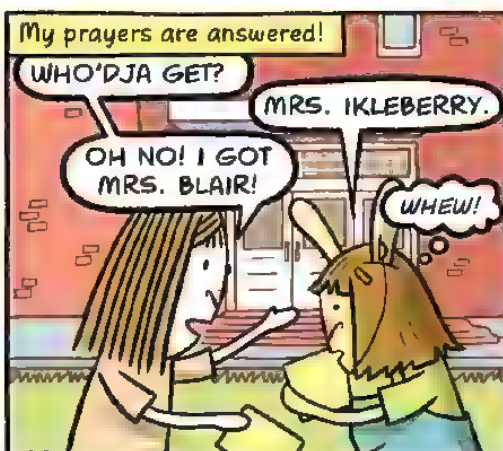
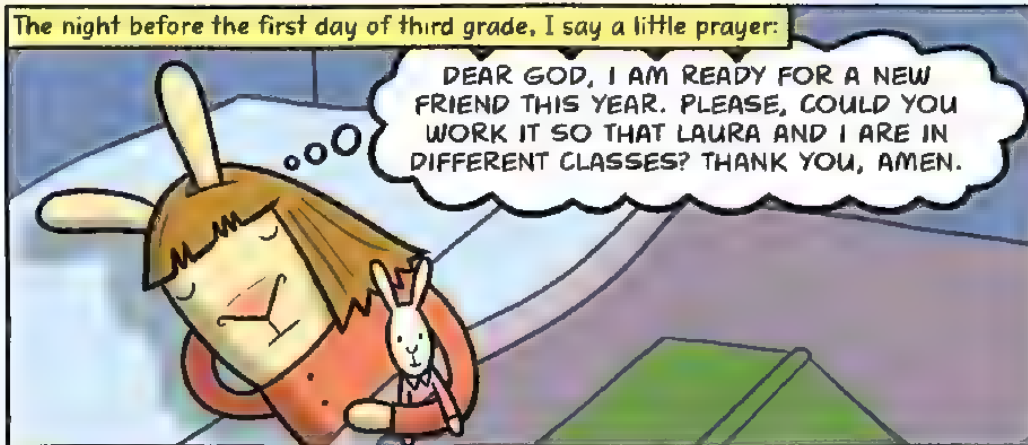


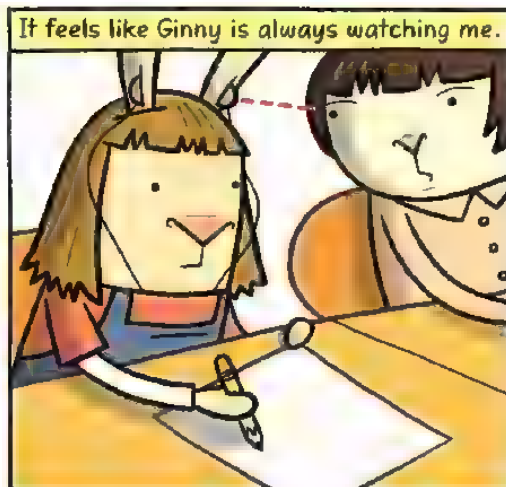
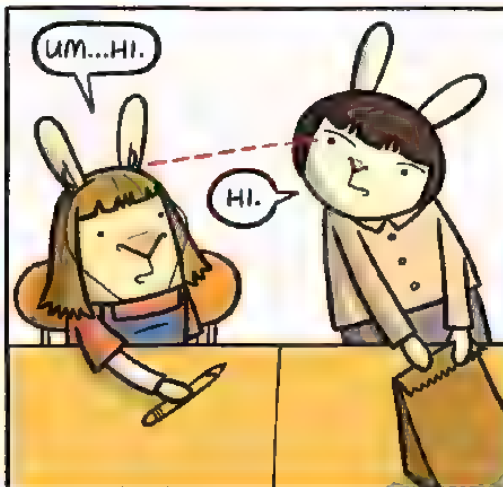
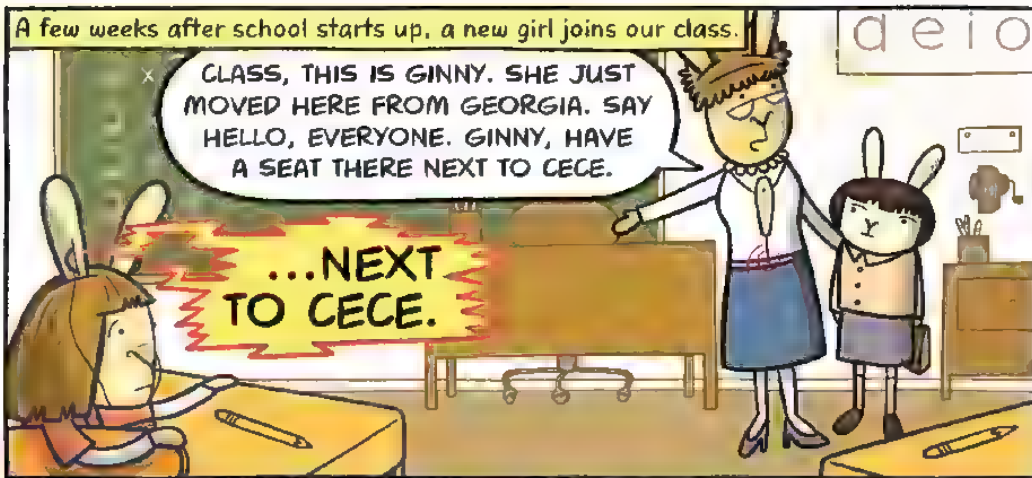
The summer after second grade, I get new behind-the-ear hearing aids to use at home. No more little hearing aid in the pouch for me! I'm excited until...



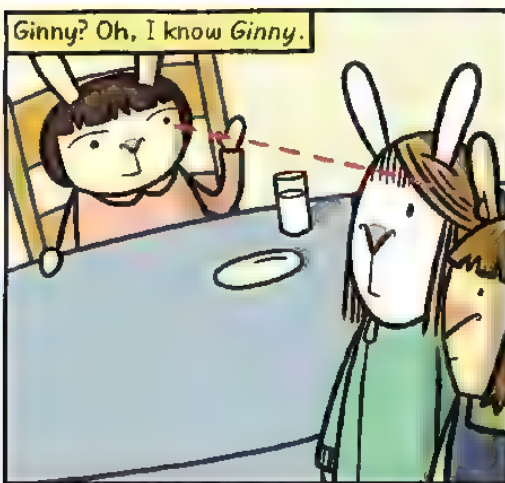
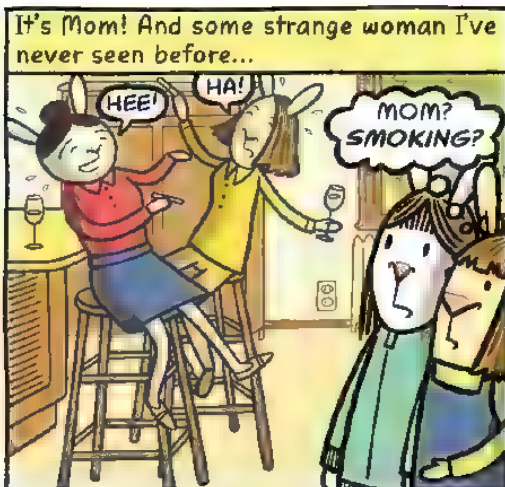
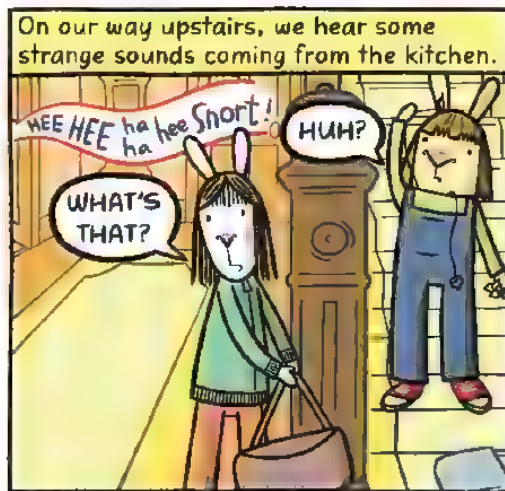
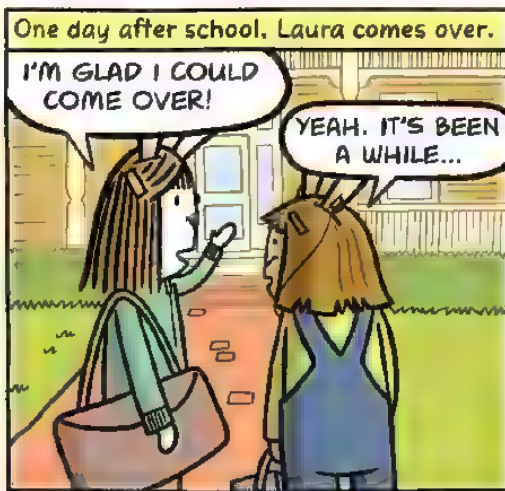
What I don't get that summer is a new friend. Here's what summer with Laura feels like:















THAT LAU-RAAA SURE BOSS-ES YOOO AH-ROUND. SHEEE'S LIKE THE SNOOOOW QUEEEEN IN NAR-NI-A OR SOME-THING.





My mother and Mrs. Wakeley are fast becoming best friends. This means that Ginny and I are spending a lot of time together, too. We discuss important matters...



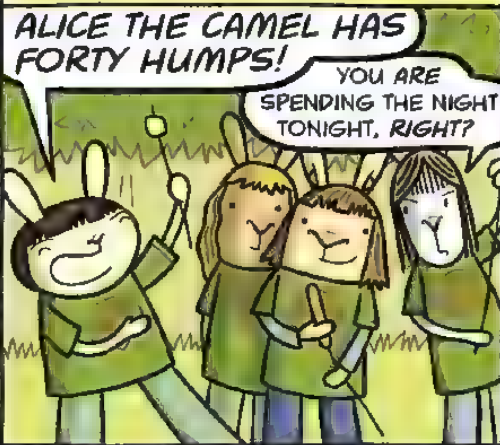
...we play with our stuffed animals...



...and we laugh over just about anything.



Ginny even joins my Girl Scout troop.

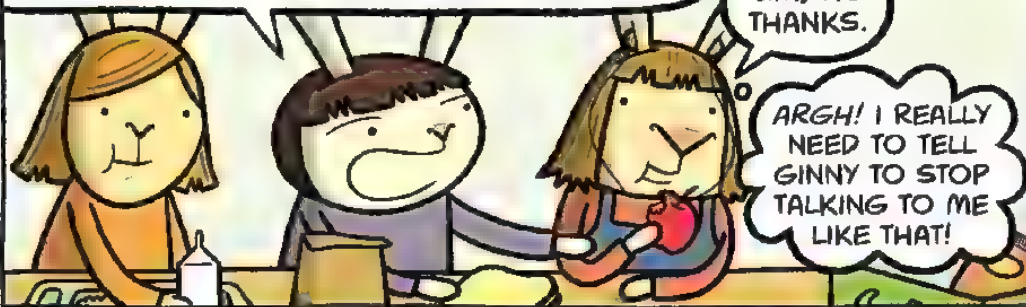


UM, GINNY ALREADY ASKED ME TO. SORRY.

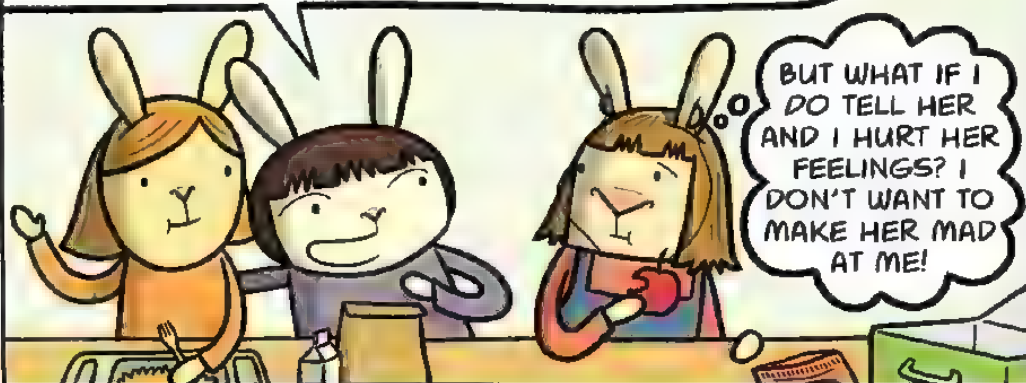


I really, really like Ginny. She's funny. She's weird. We love all the same things. So what's the problem? It's the way she talks to me—and the way she talks about me.

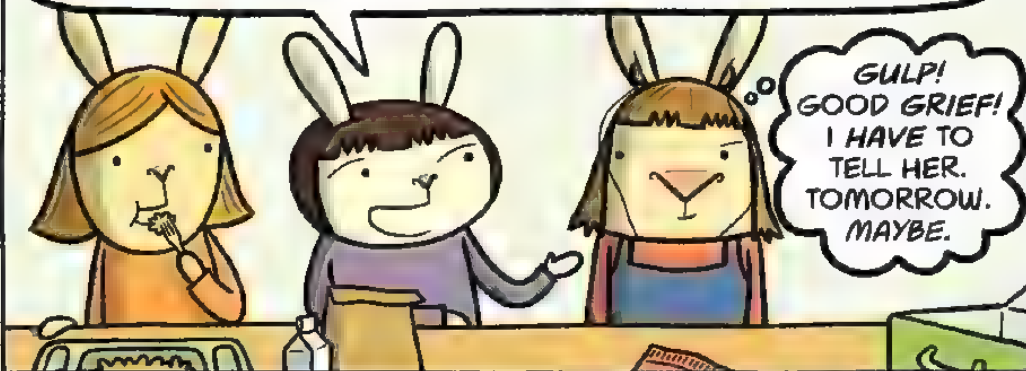
CEE-CEE. DOO YOO WANT MYYY PEEA-NUT BUTT-ER SAND-WICH?



CEE-CEE, THIS IS KREEE-STEN!



CEE-CEE IS MY DEAF FRIEND. SHE IS ACT-U-A-LLY ONE OF MY BEST-EST FRIENDS!



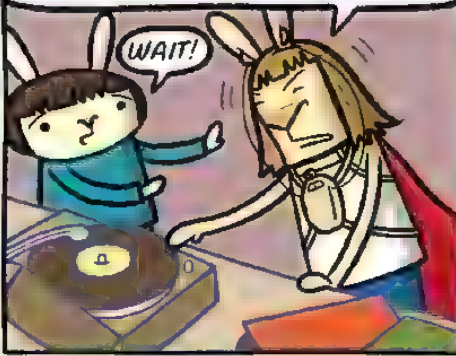




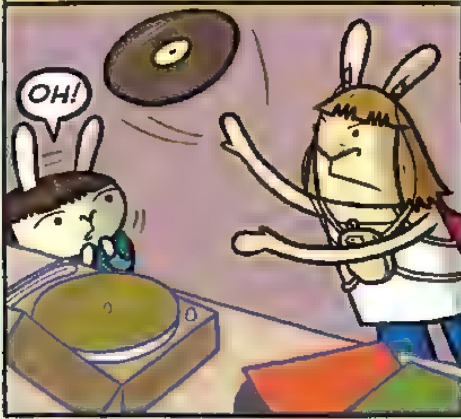


Our hero trembles with frustration!  
She grabs the offending record...

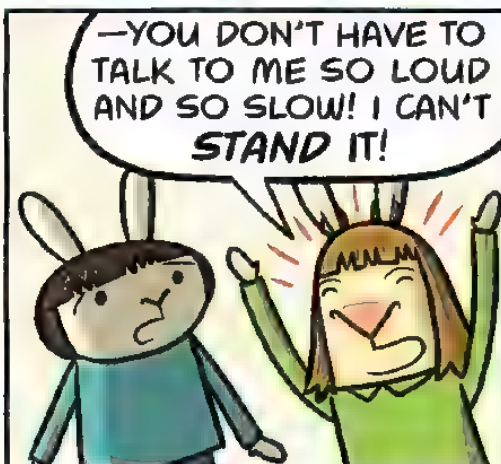
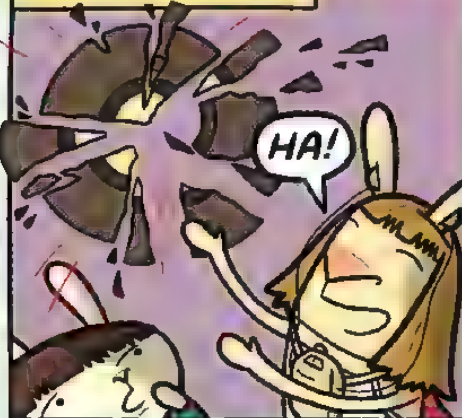
I. JUST. CAN'T. TAKE IT ANYMORE.

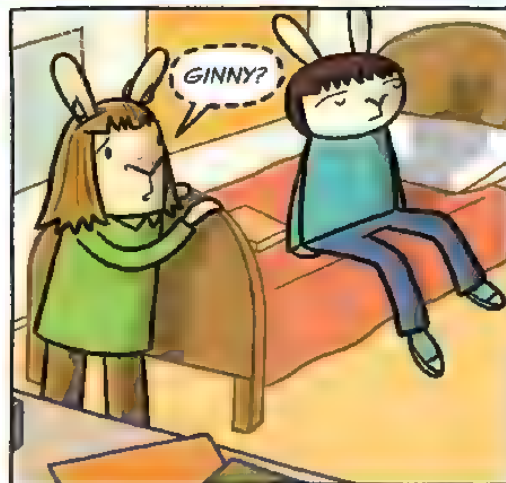


...and throws it against the wall...



...shattering it—forever!

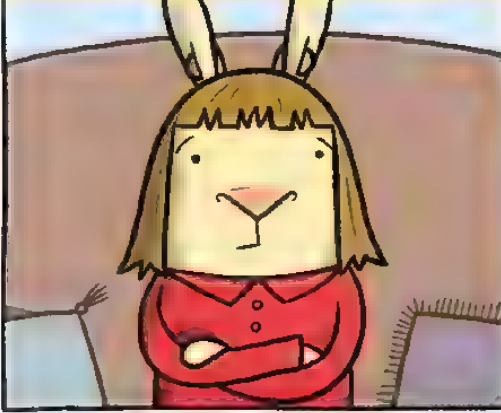




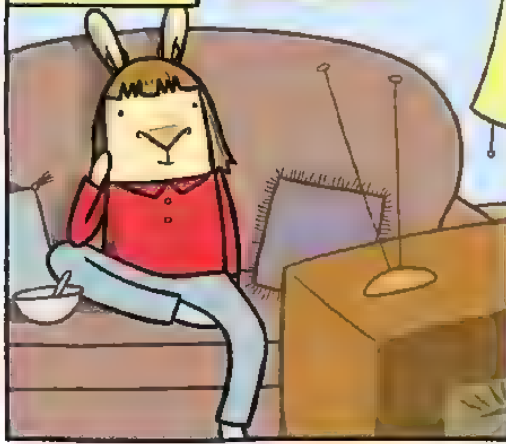


seven

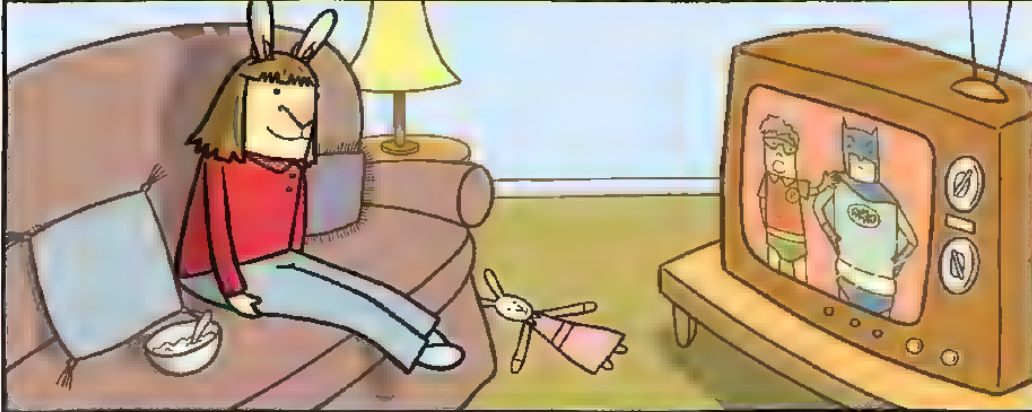
School. Friends. No friends. The Phonic Ear. It's all so exhausting. I need a break.



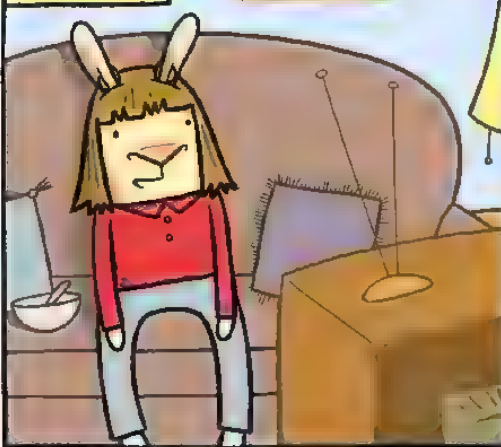
So I watch TV.



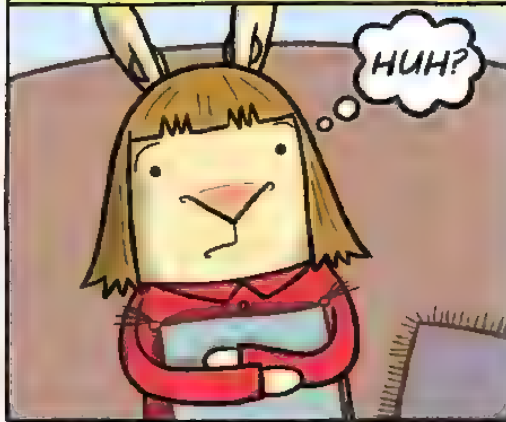
I watch anything that's on. Everything, in fact. Soap operas. Cartoons. Old sitcoms. New sitcoms. Dramas. Even commercials! And the crazy thing is...

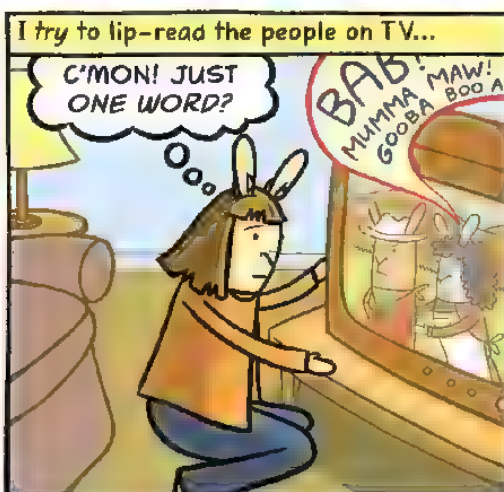
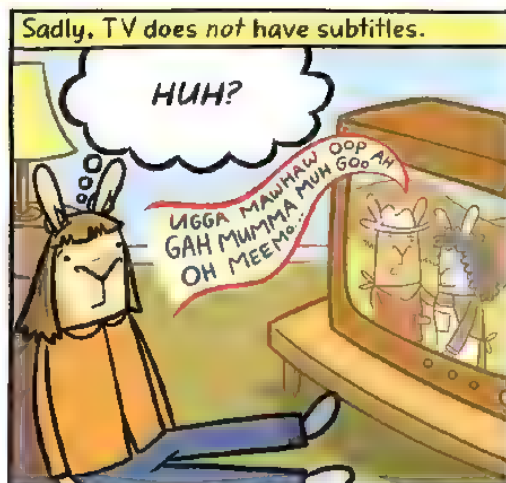
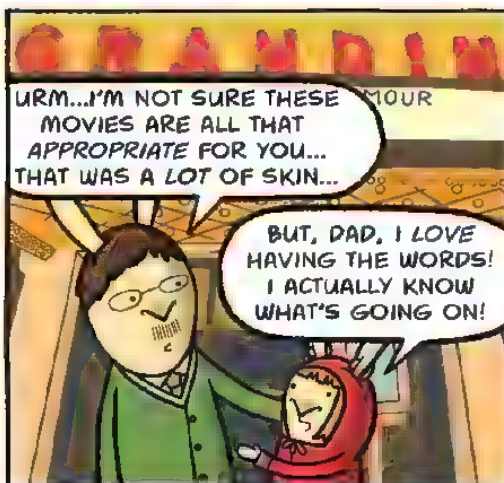
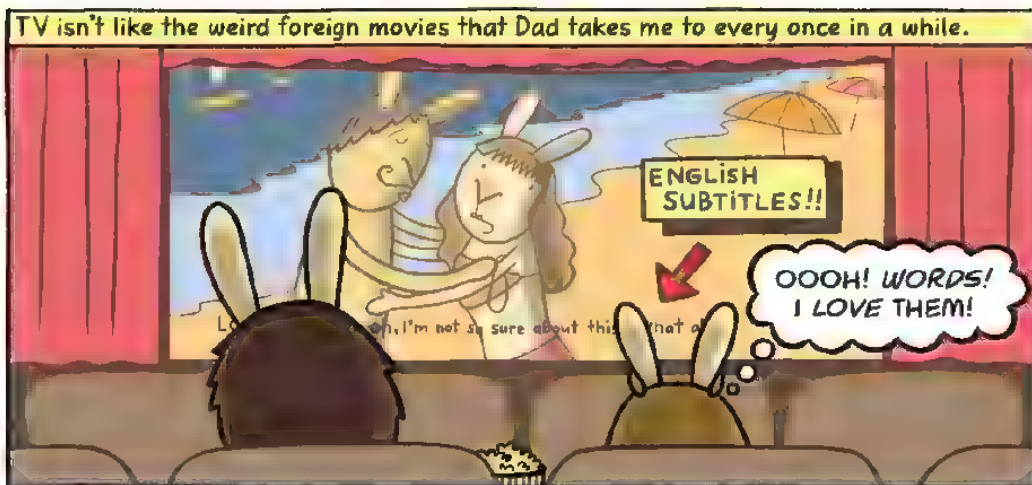


...I love TV...

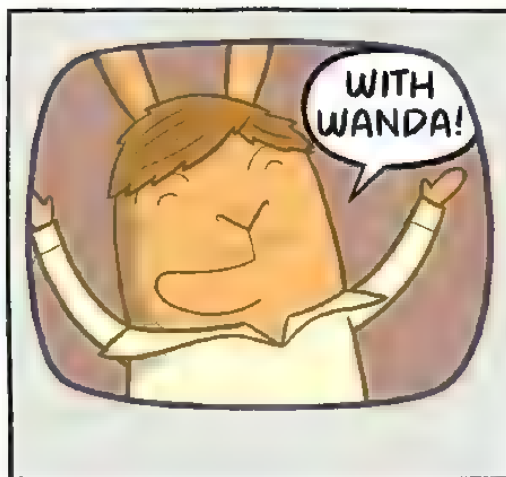
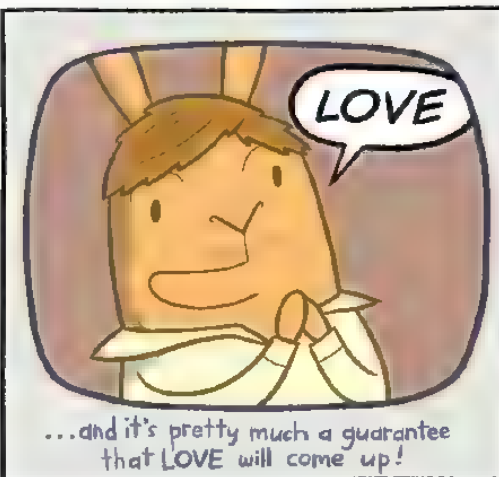
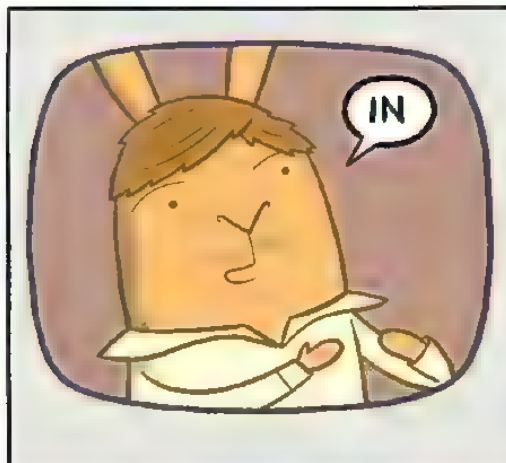
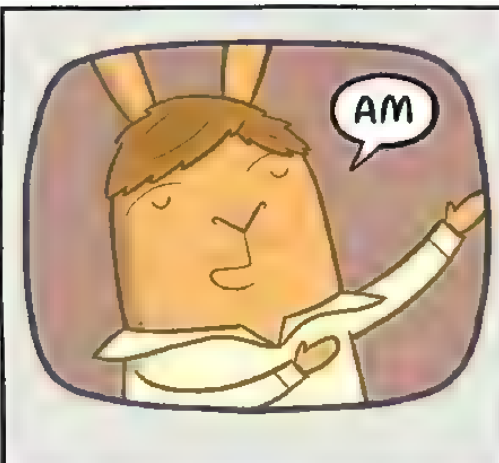
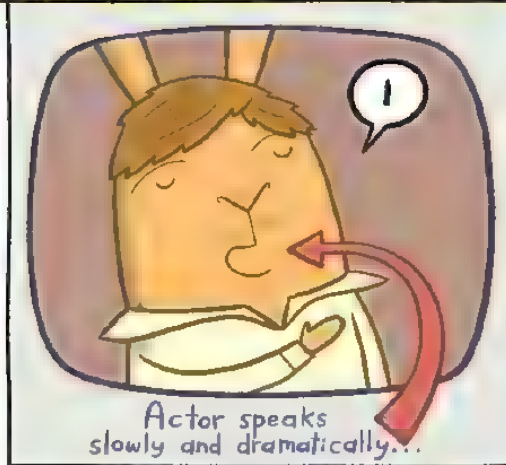


...even though it's so hard to understand what the people on it are saying!



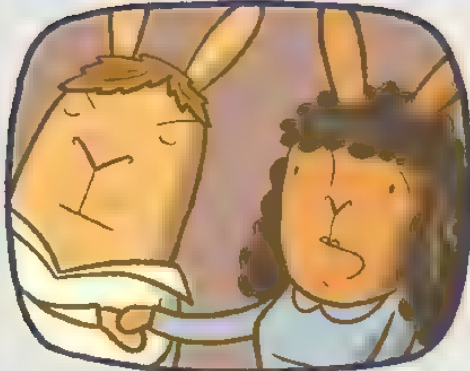


I keep watching, though. Some shows are fairly easy to lip-read, like soap operas:

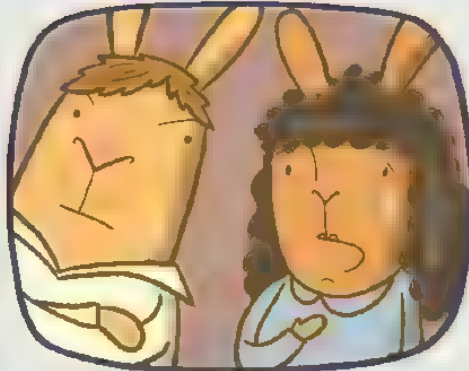




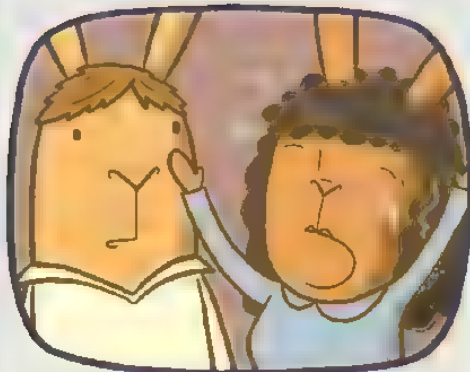
But who wants to watch soap operas? They're so mushy...



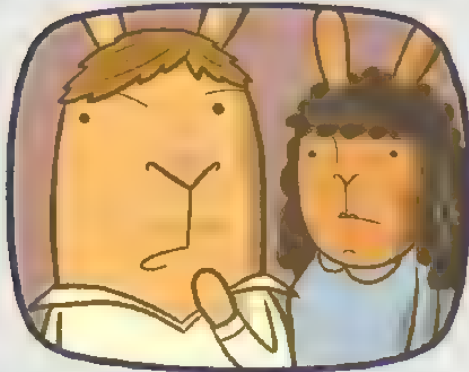
BUT...I NEED YOU, JIM!



AND I WANT TO HAVE...



...A BABY WITH YOU!



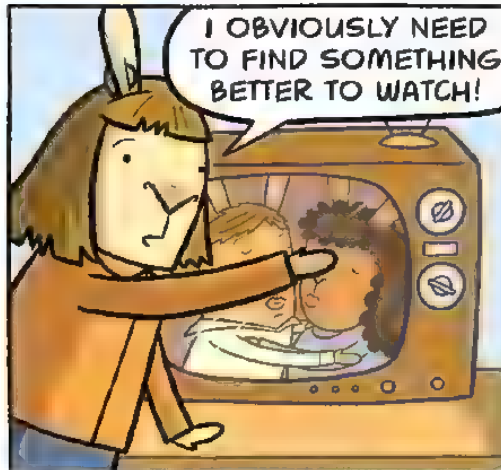
UM, SORRY. I LOVE WANDA!

...and so boring!



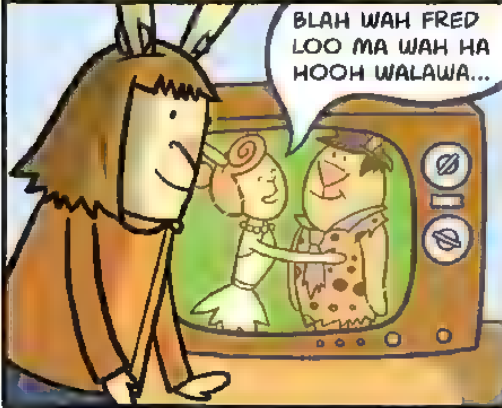
IT'S THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

...AND WE'RE STILL HAVING THE SAME CONVERSATION!

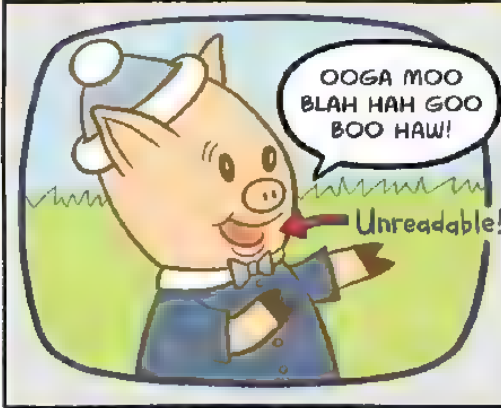


I OBVIOUSLY NEED TO FIND SOMETHING BETTER TO WATCH!

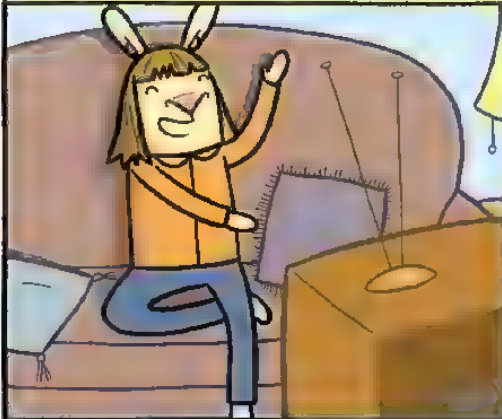
Aha! Cartoons! I love cartoons! But lip-reading cartoons? Impossible!



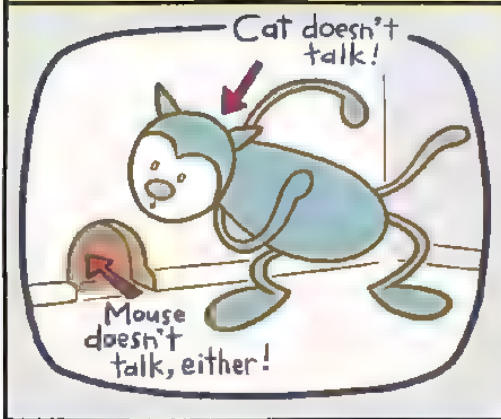
Cartoon lips are not like real lips at all. Not even close.



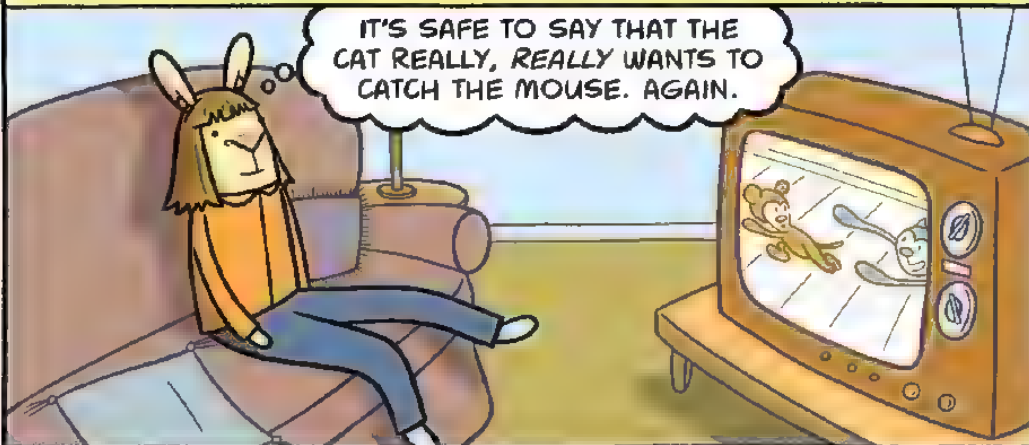
But I love cartoons anyway. The characters do so many funny things that I can see.



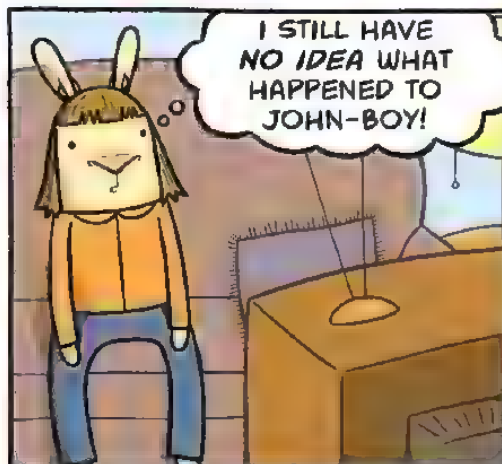
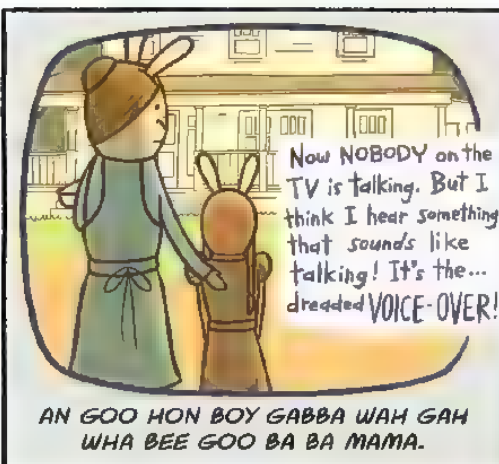
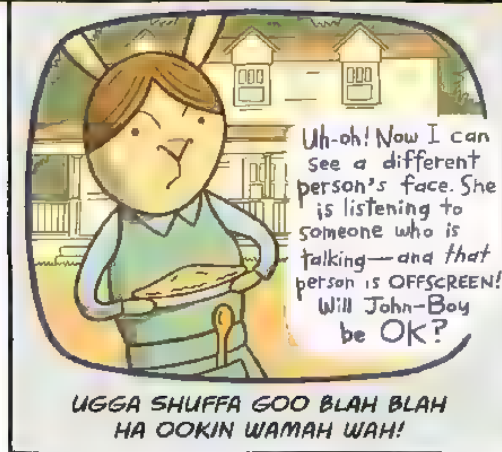
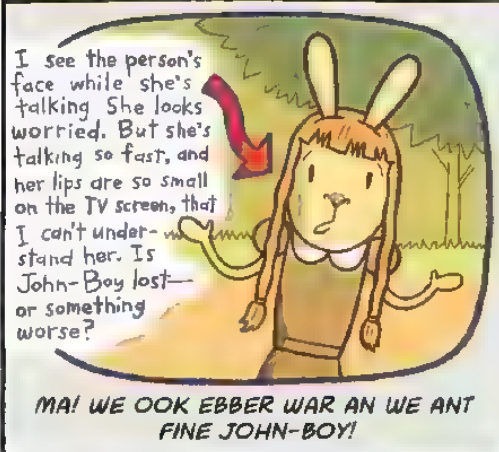
And hey, check it out! Here's a cartoon that doesn't have any talking at all!



But as much as I love cartoons, even they can be pretty boring sometimes.



I watch other shows on TV, too, even if they are not as easy to understand as soap operas and cartoons. I might catch a few of the words in these shows, but not many.

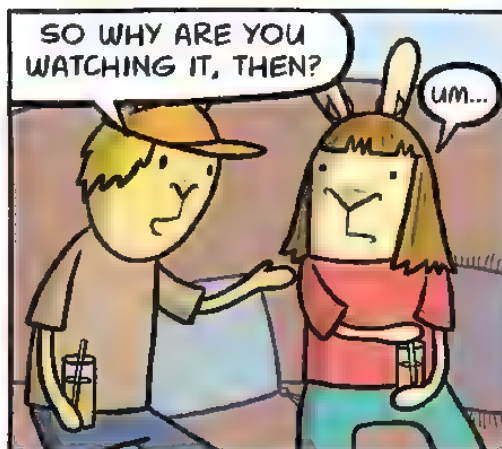
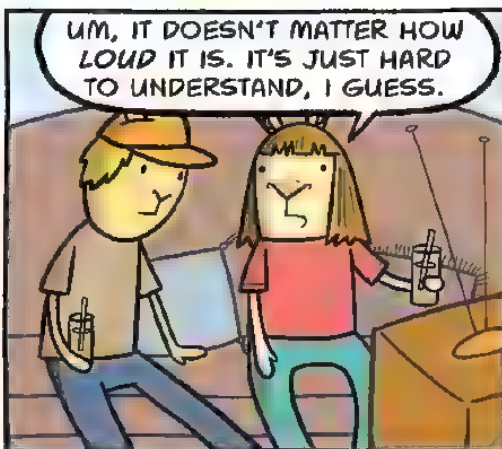




If I'm watching TV with somebody who doesn't know me well, like a neighborhood kid whose mom is visiting my mom, then that kid almost always asks:



Well, here's what happens when I turn up the TV:



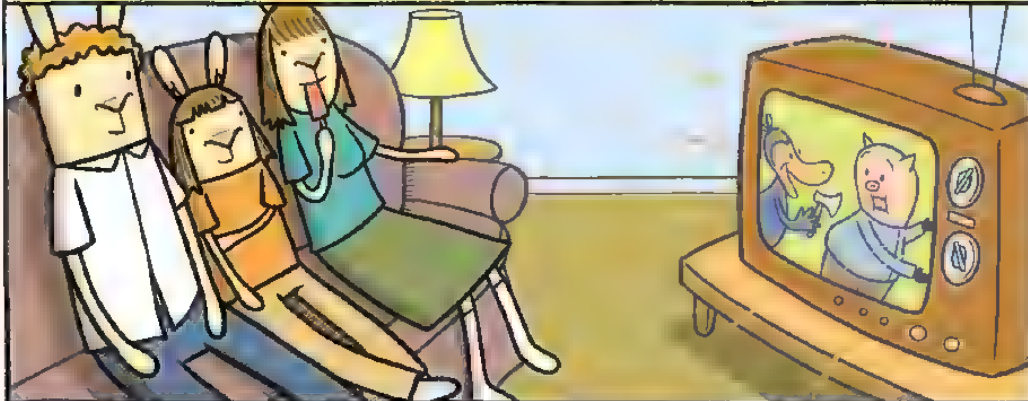
Well, I guess I watch TV because the folks on it are there for me whenever I want them—and they don't care if I can hear them or not!



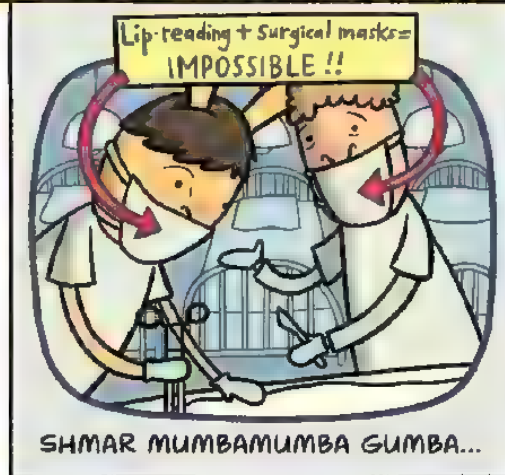
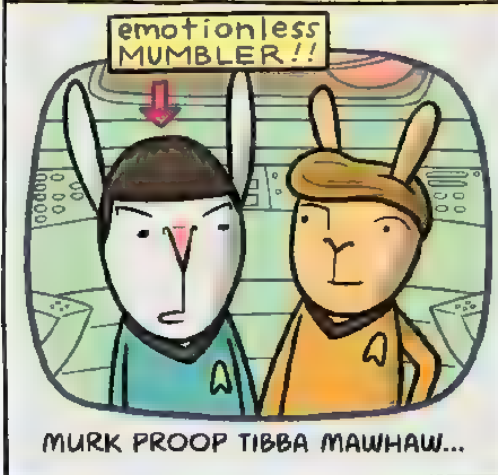
Not so there for me are my older siblings—Ashley and Sarah. They are often busy doing mysterious older-kid things:



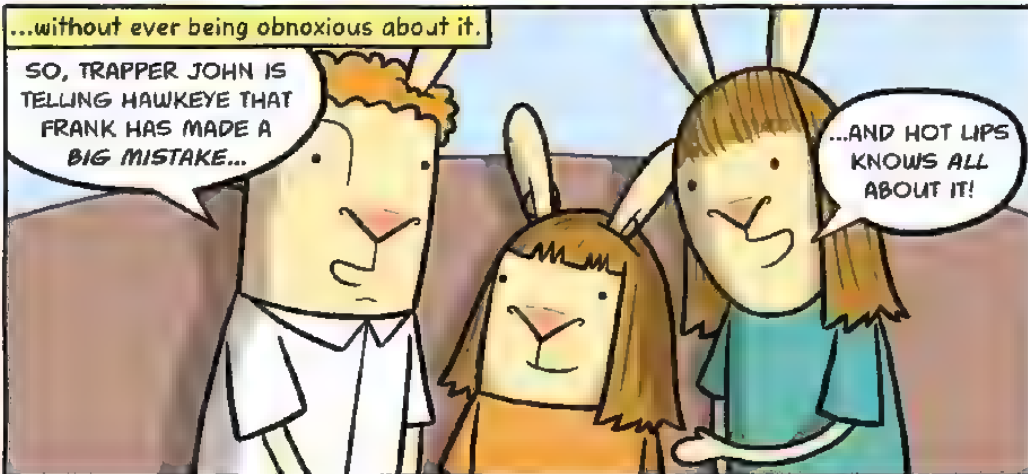
But when they aren't busy, they watch TV. A lot of TV. If I want to spend any time with Ashley and Sarah, it's gotta be while watching TV. So that's what I do.



However, the shows that Ashley and Sarah watch are impossible to understand.



But luckily they are nice enough to tell me what the people on TV are saying...

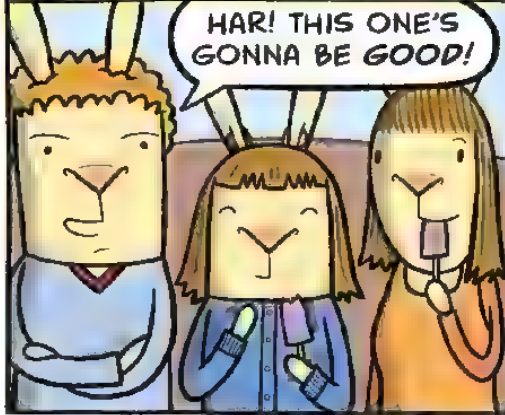




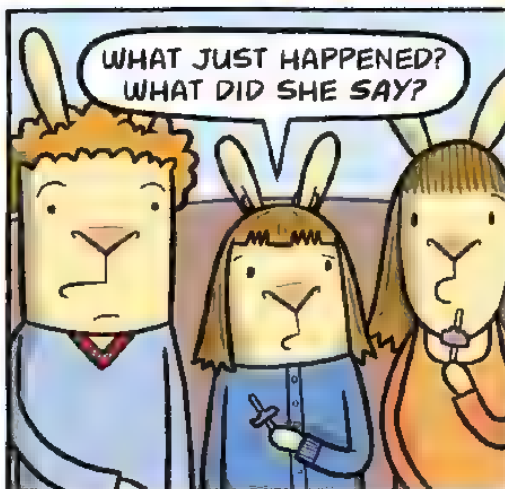
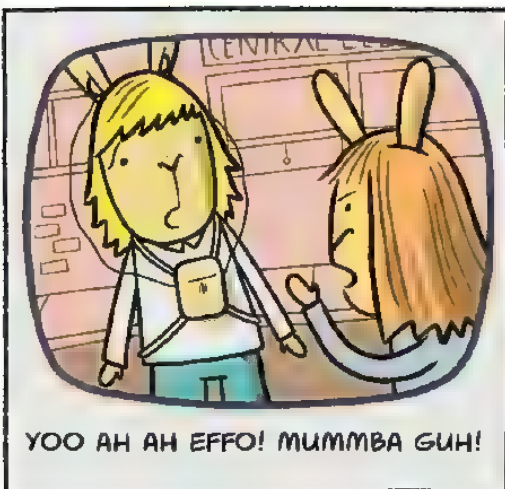
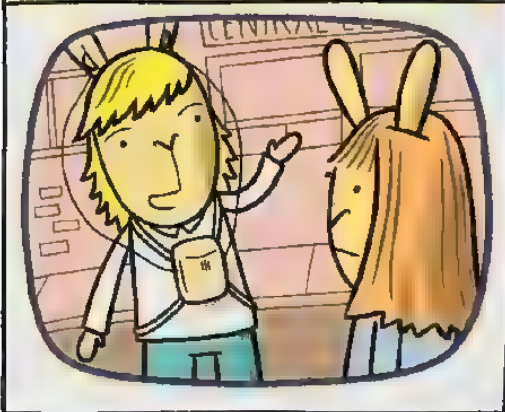
Every now and then, ABC shows an hour-long movie made especially for kids.

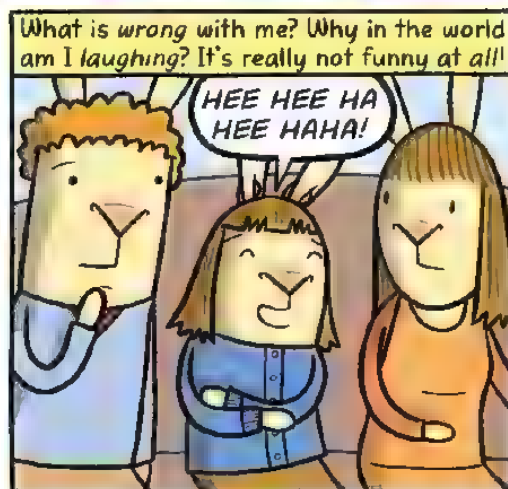
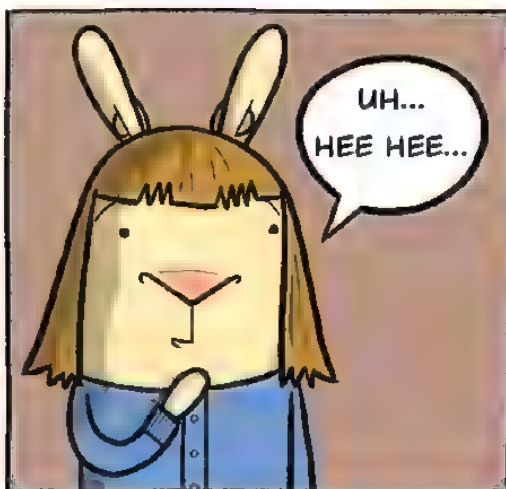
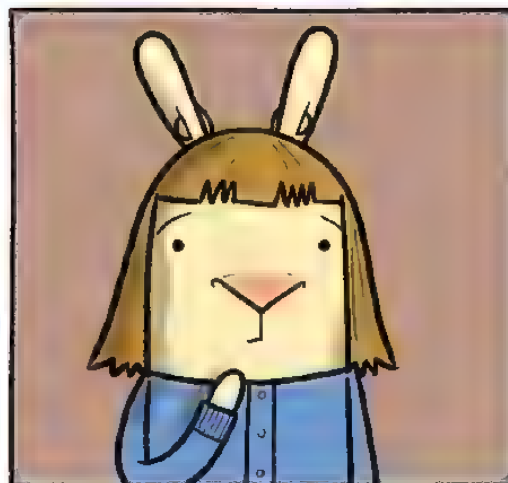
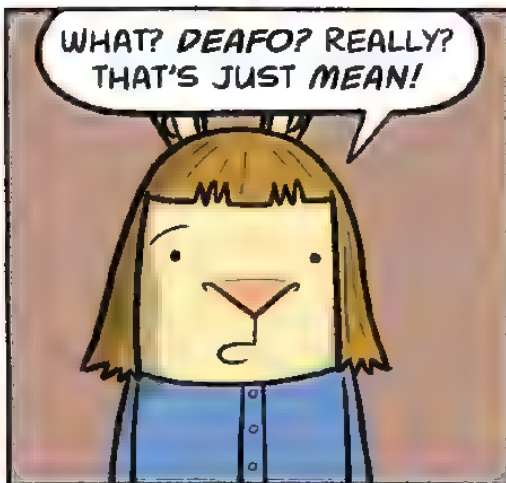
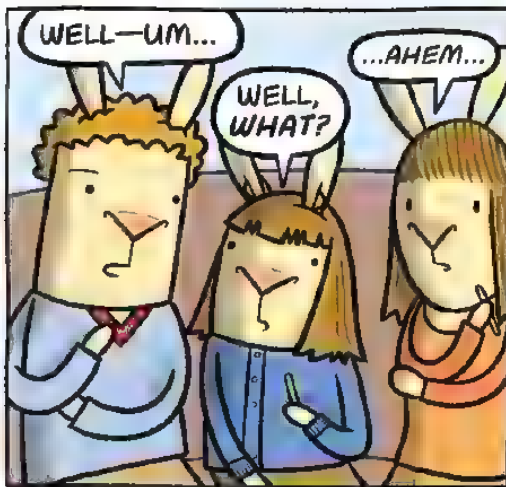


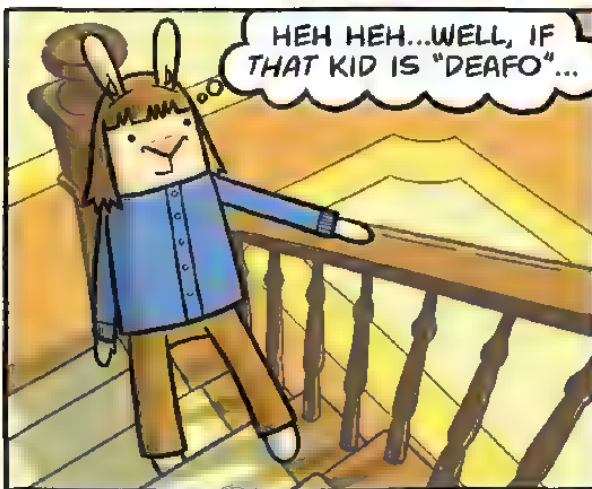
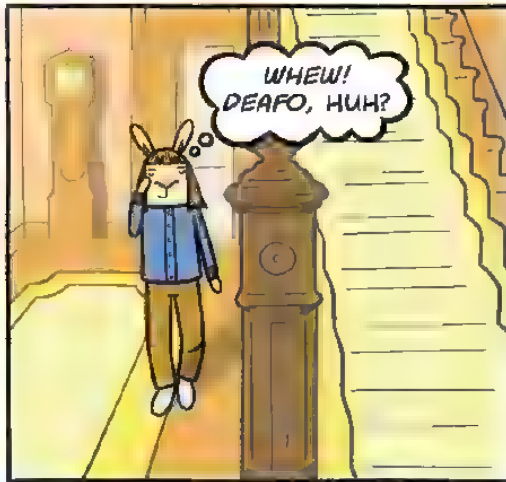
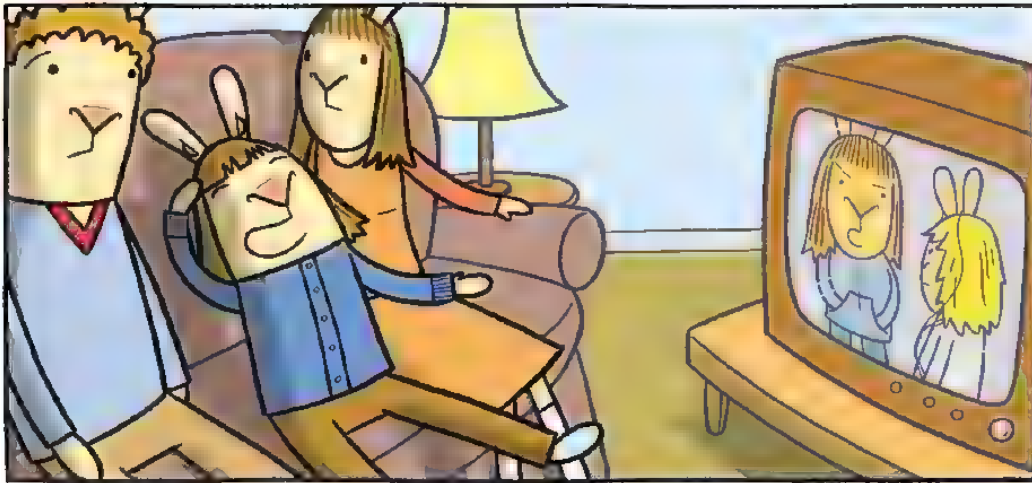
Sometimes these movies are super corny. We really love the ones that are.



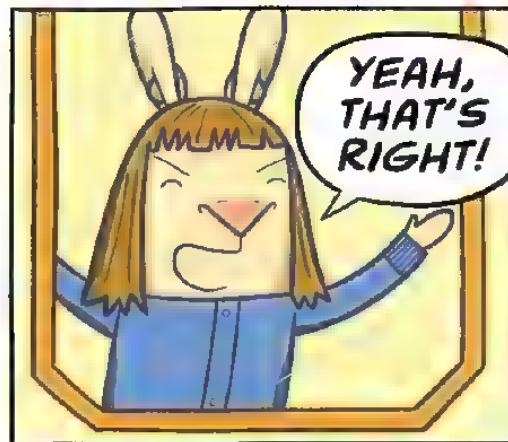
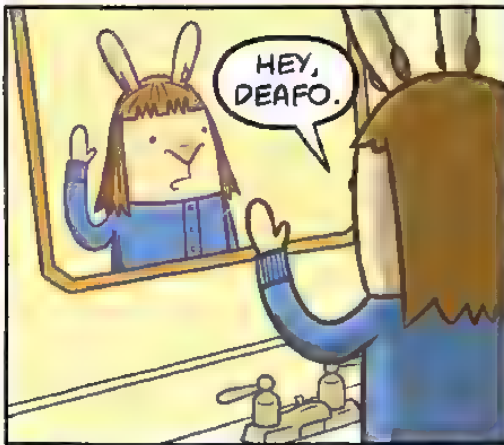
When this one starts—wait a minute! Is she wearing what I think she's wearing?







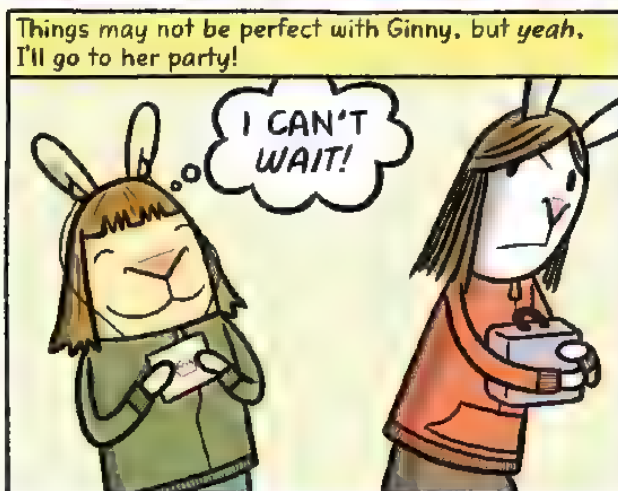




eight

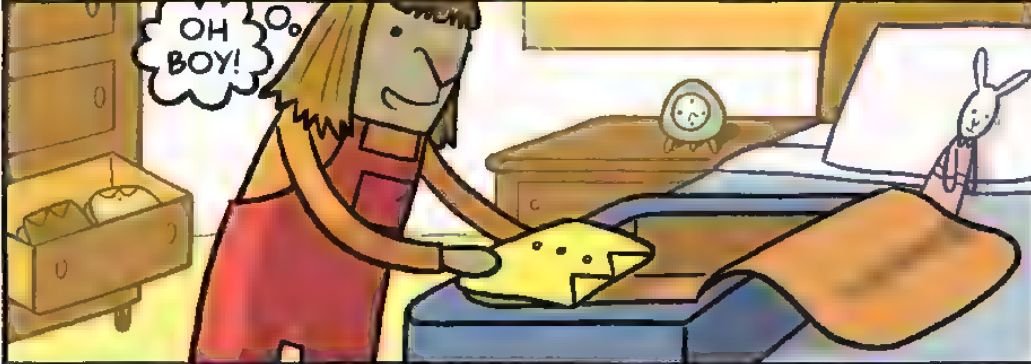
A few weeks after my argument with Ginny, I see her handing out little cards. I wonder what they say. Will I get one, too?

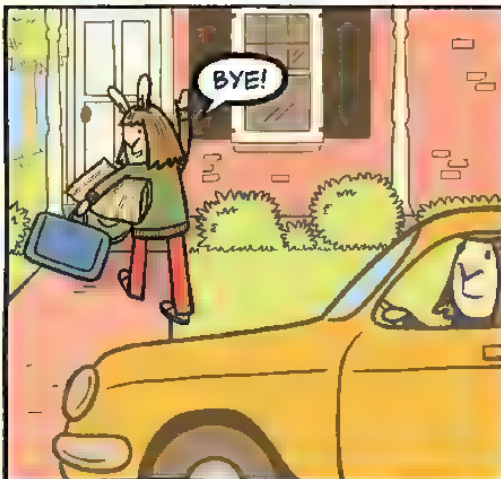
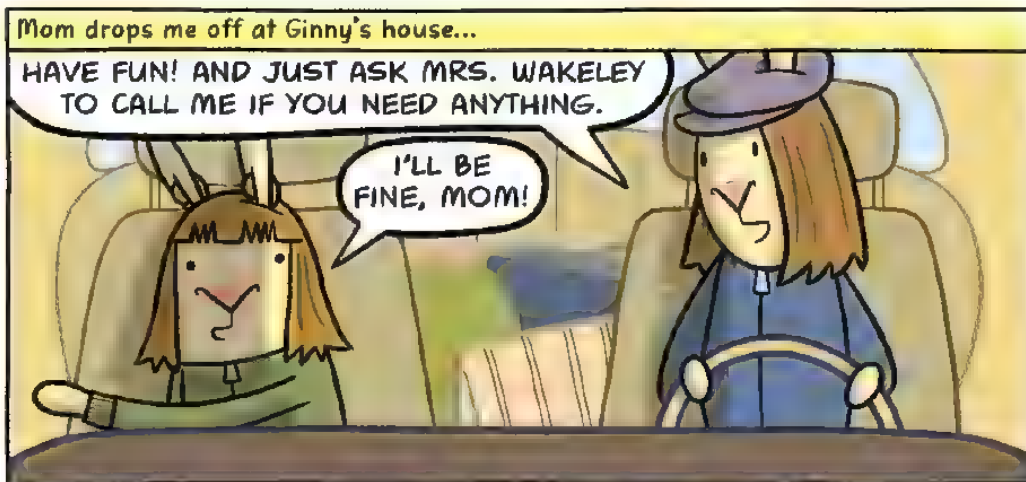




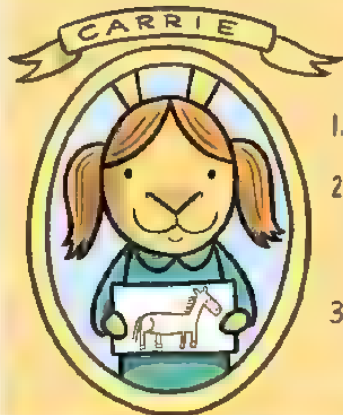


After a long week of waiting, the day of the sleepover is finally here! I pack as soon as I get home from school.





The other guests arrive...



1. Shy, but nice.
2. Draws really good horses.
3. Soft voice. So hard to hear!

UH, HI? I BROUGHT SOME CANDY. WANT SOME?

HUH?



1. Asks too many personal questions.
2. Always smells good.
3. Not shy at all.

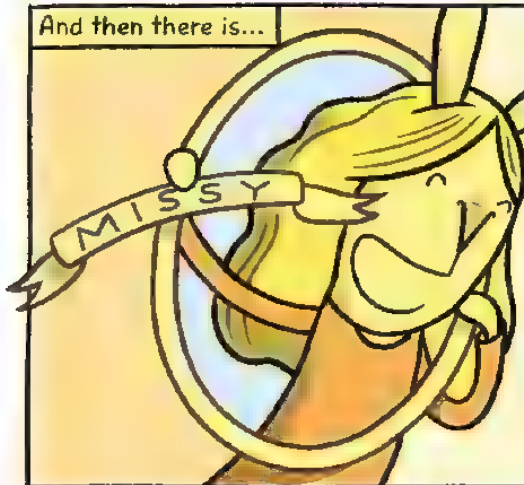
WHERE ARE THOSE CORDS THAT ARE USUALLY COMING OUT OF YOUR EARS?

WHY DO YOU WEAR OVERALLS SO MUCH?

ARE YOU **DEATH**?

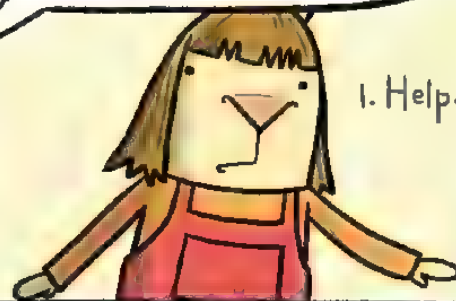


And then there is...

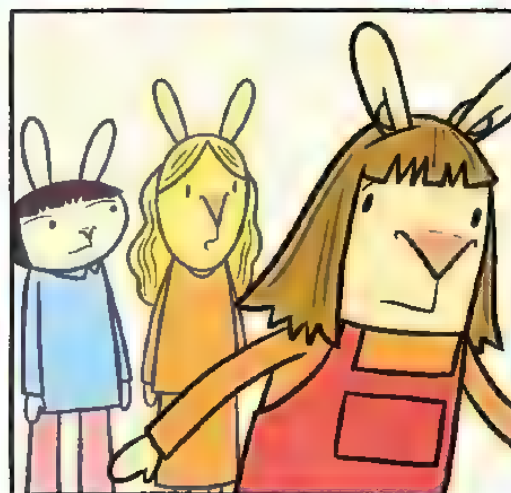
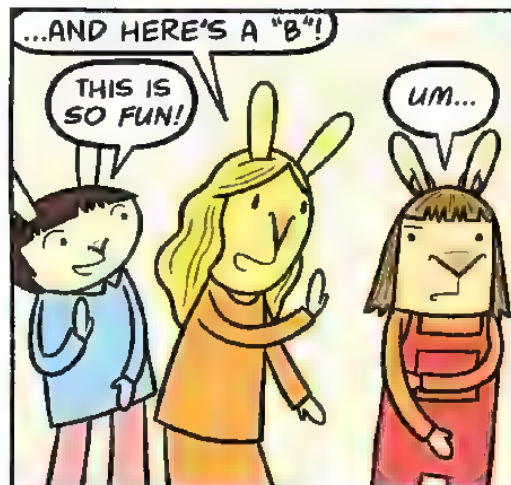
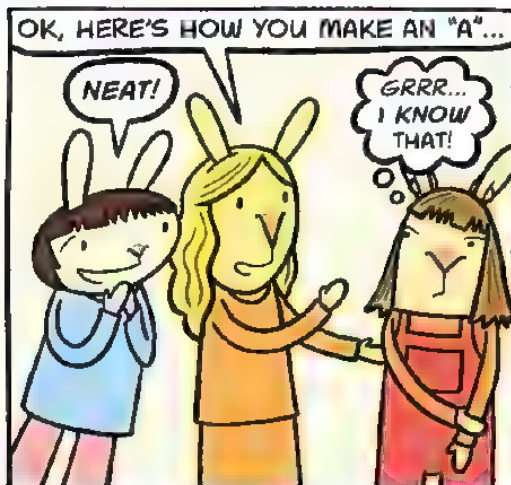
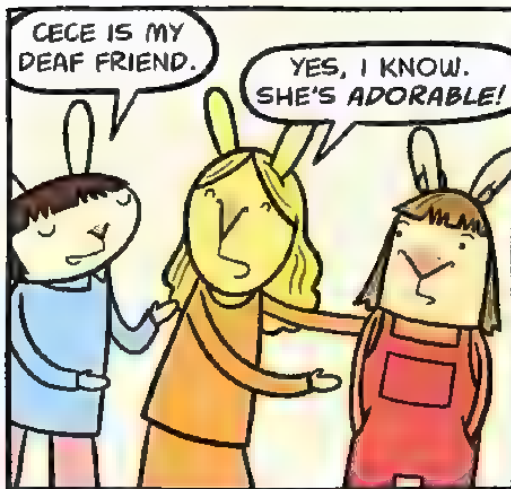


OH! IT'S THE LITTLE DEAF GIRL FROM MRS. IKLEBERRY'S CLASS! GINNY'S TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOU!

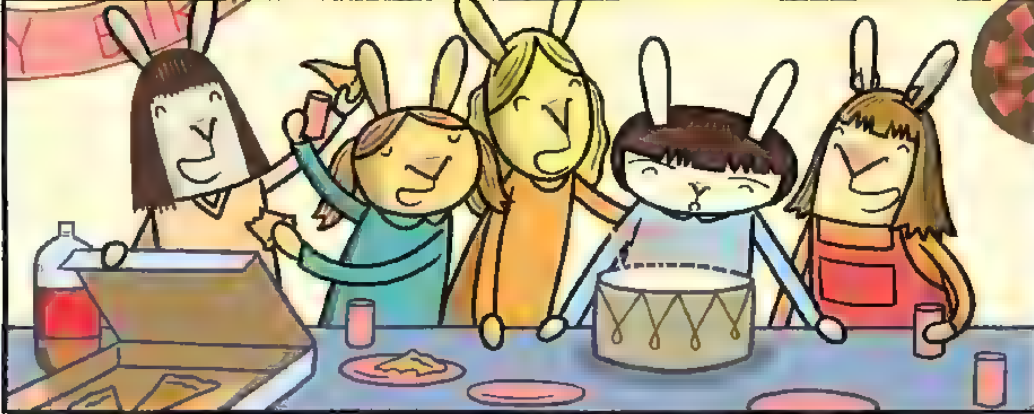
1. Help.



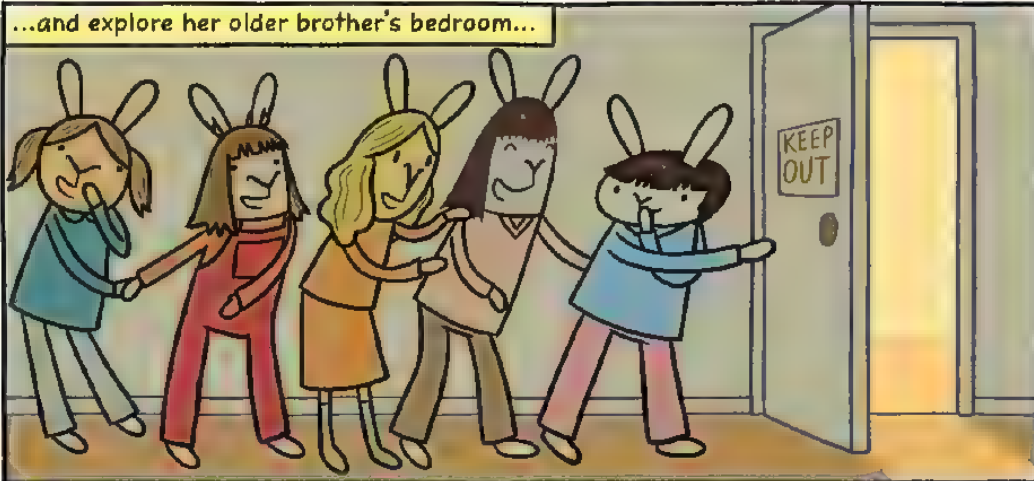




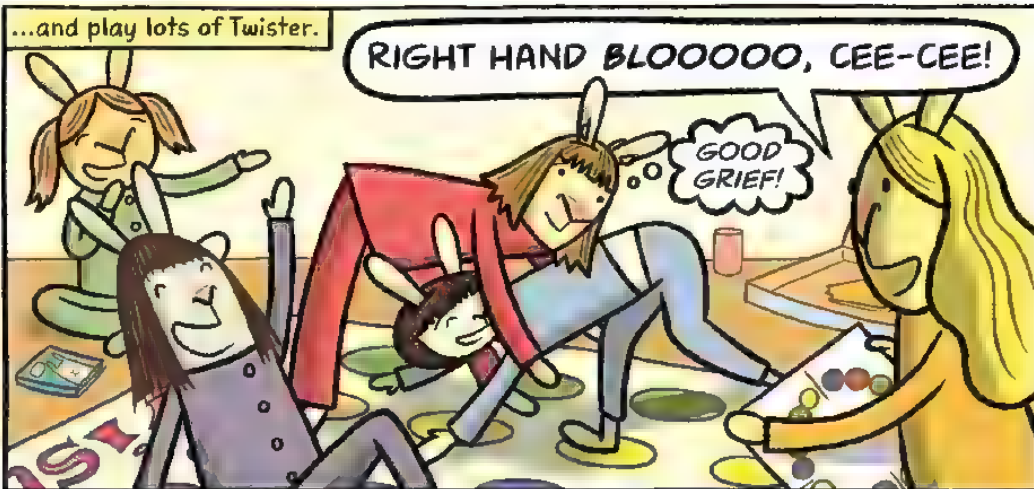
In spite of that rough beginning, I start having a great time at Ginny's sleepover. We celebrate Ginny's birthday...



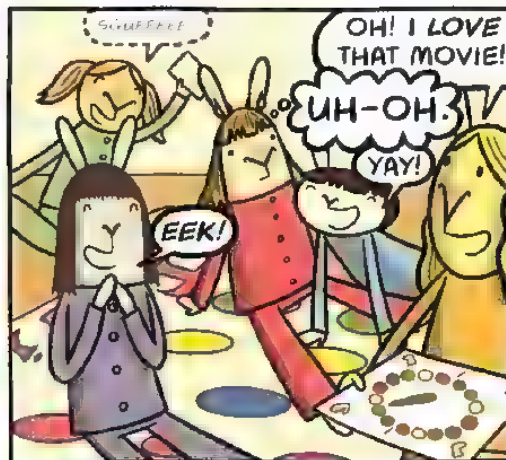
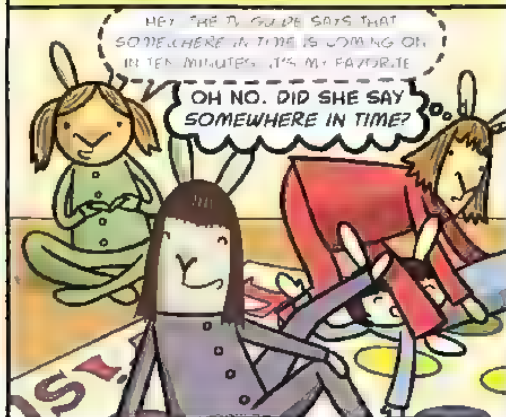
...and explore her older brother's bedroom...



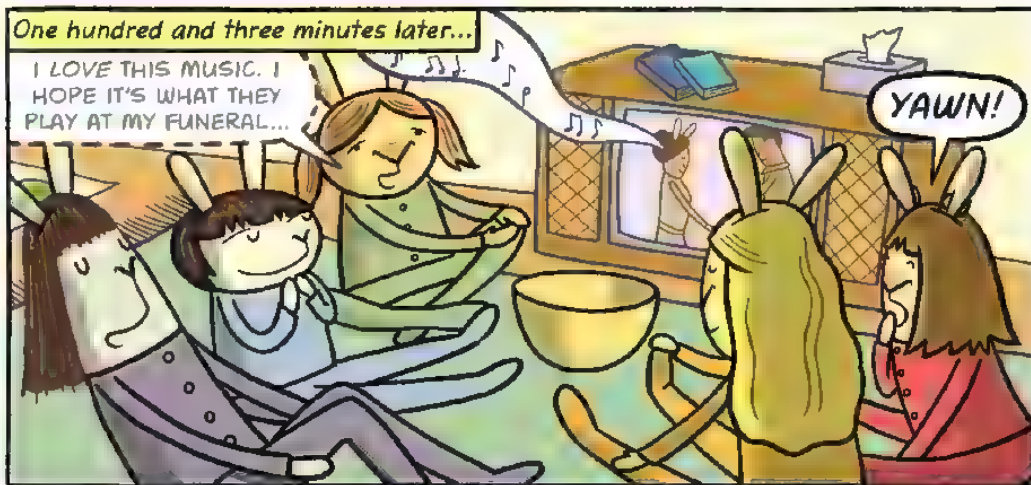
...and play lots of Twister.



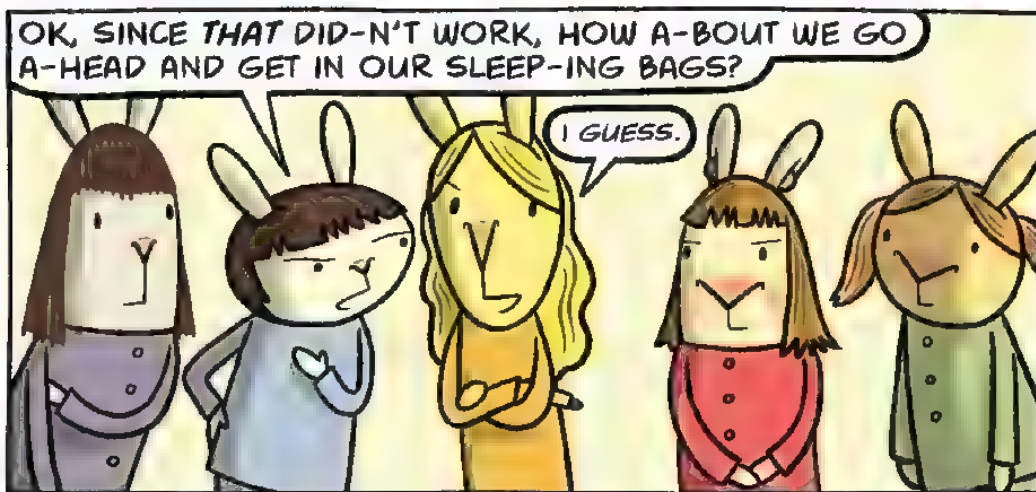
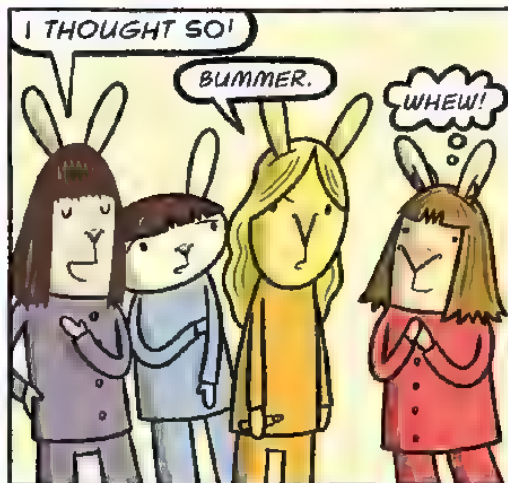
But then things start to go downhill again.



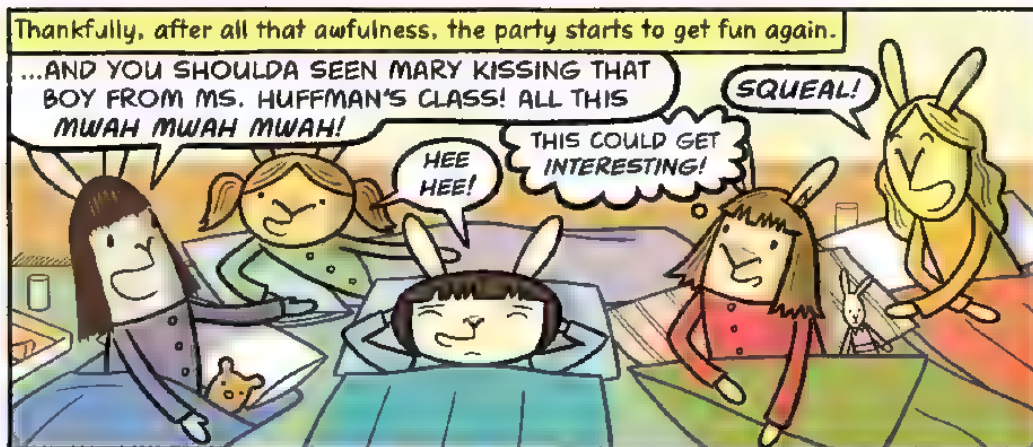




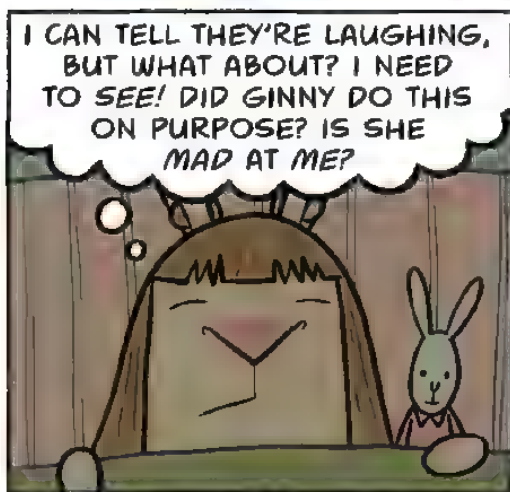
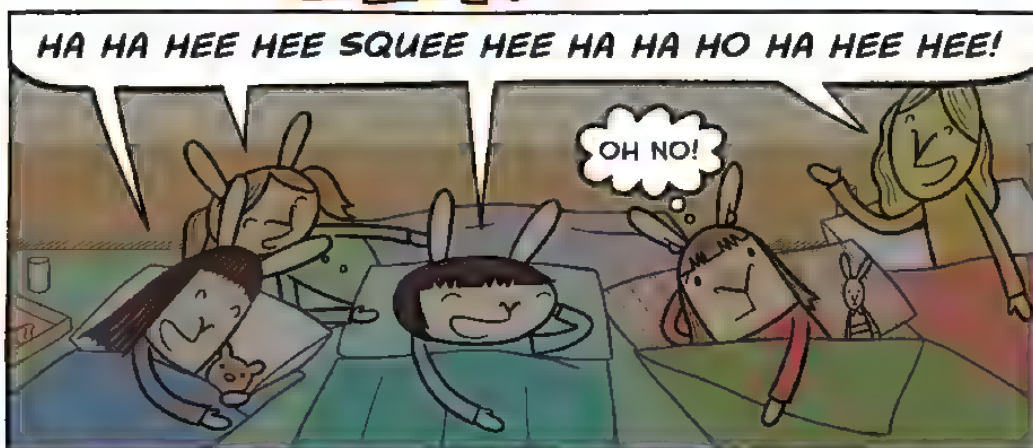


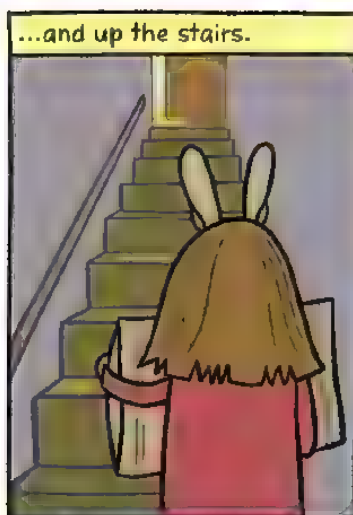
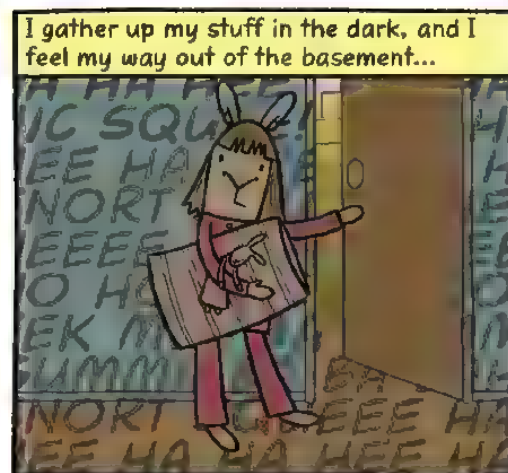
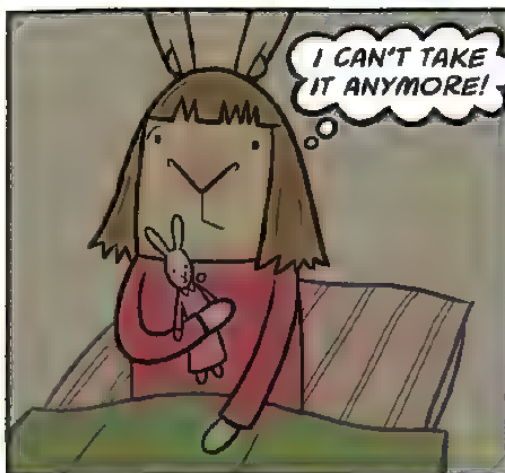
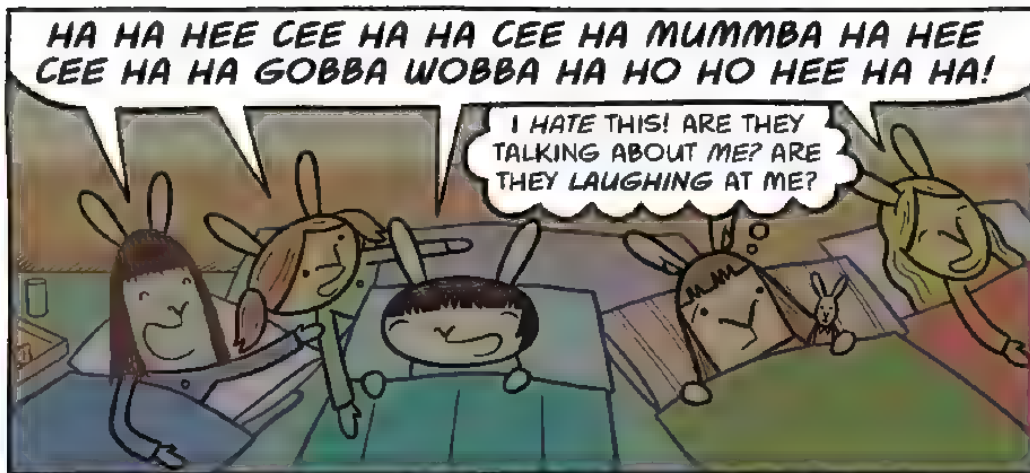




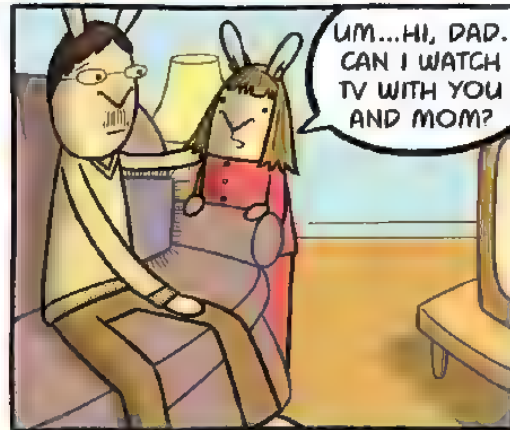
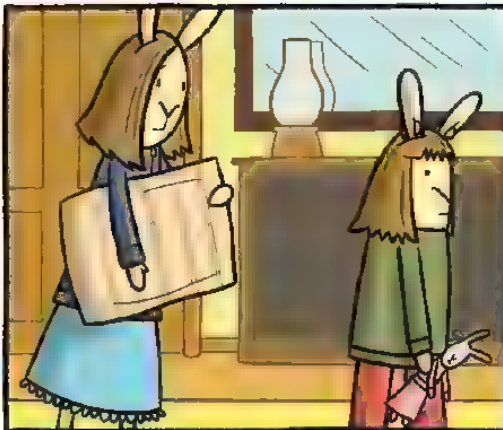
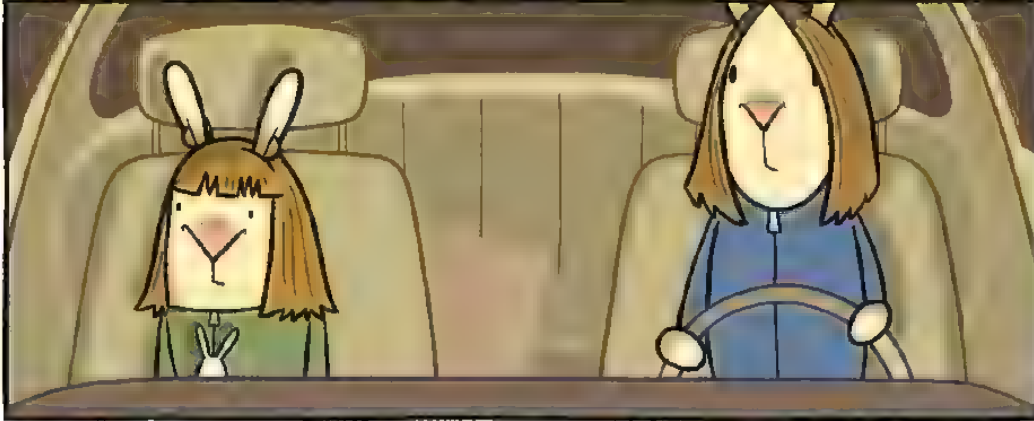


But then— **CLIK!** —Ginny turns the lights out!

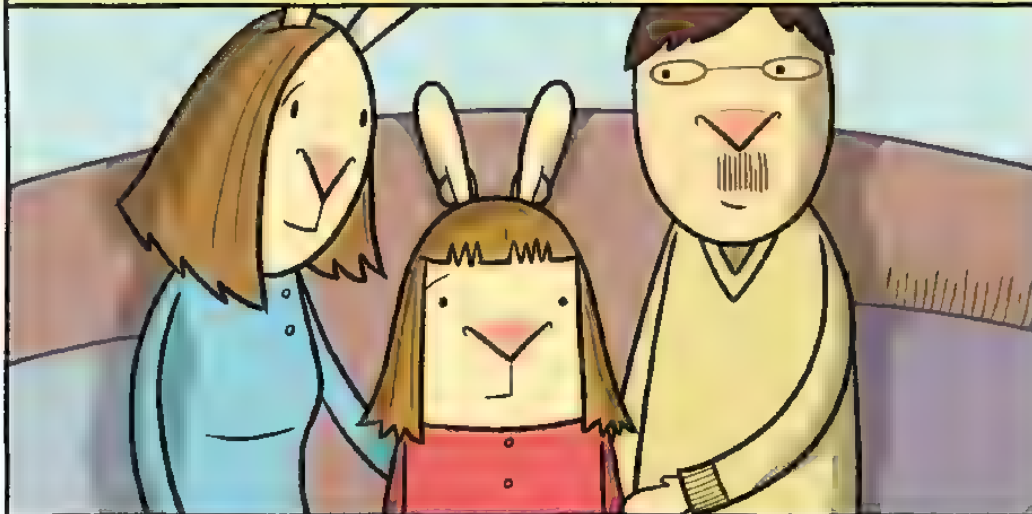




I am relieved that Mom doesn't ask any questions on the way home.



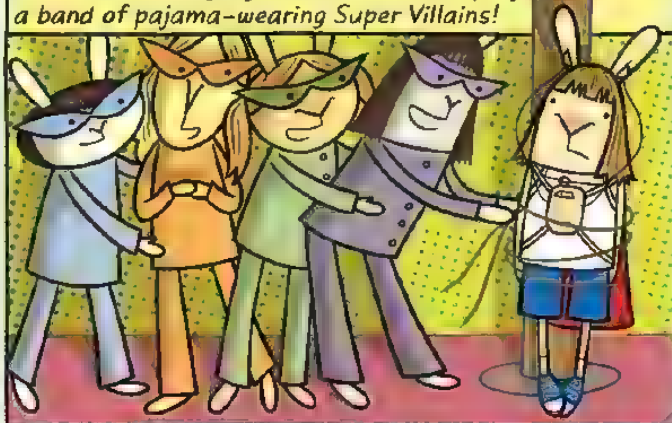
Oh, I'm so glad to be home. What a night. I wish I'd told those girls what I think!







Our hero, the mighty El Deafo, is tied up by a band of pajama-wearing Super Villains!



The Super Villains interrogate El Deafo—and torture her with more Somewhere in Time! But El Deafo is strong...



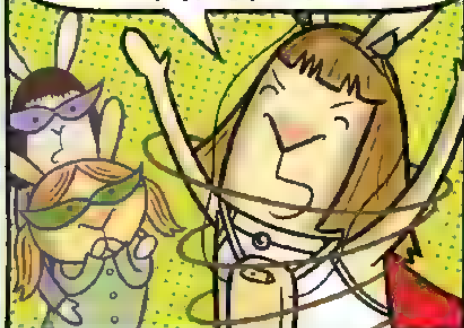
WHAT ARE THOSE CORDS FOR?

WHY DO YOU WEAR OVERALLS SO MUCH?

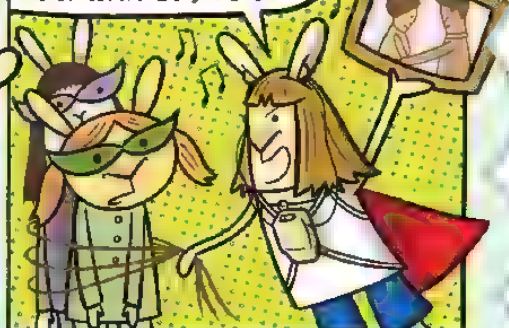
ARE YOU DEATH?

wah wah wah

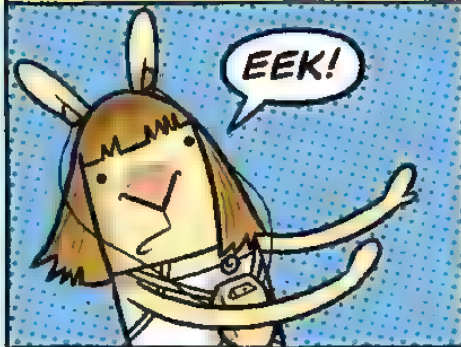
YES, I'M DEATH! AND YOU ARE NEXT ON MY LIST!



HERE'S A TASTE OF YOUR OWN ROPE—AND SOME OF THAT FUNERAL MUSIC YOU WANTED, TOO!



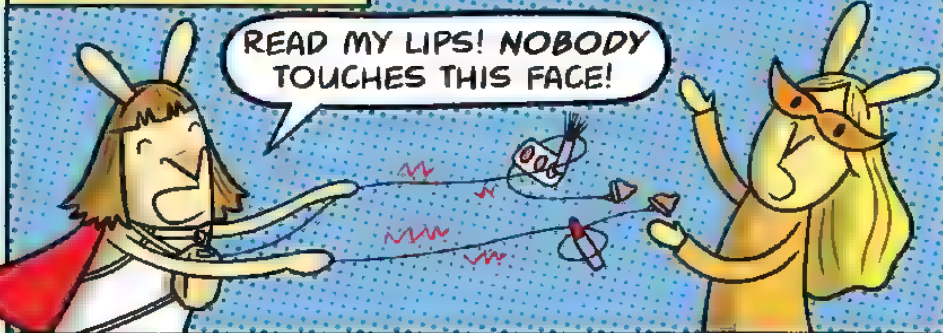
But it's not over yet for El Deafo! She is accosted by another menacing foe...



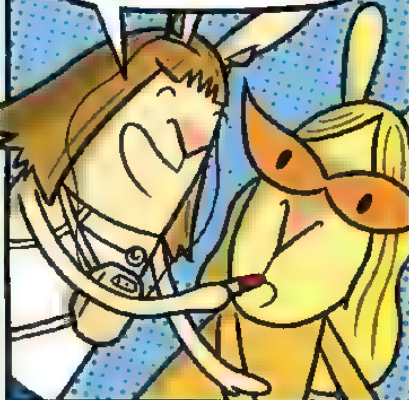
I AM SUPERMISSY!  
PREPARE FOR BEAUTY,  
MY LITTLE DEAF FRIEND!



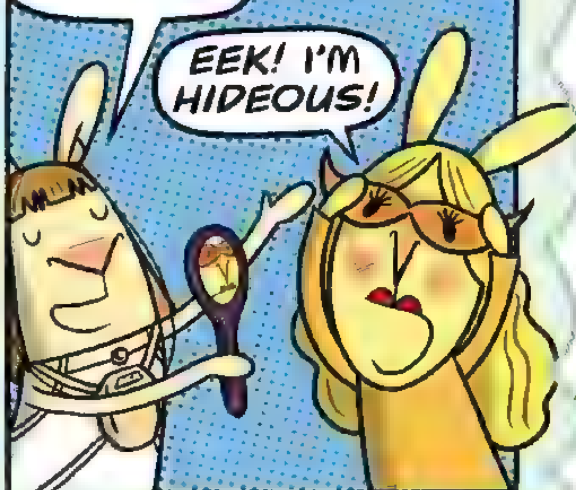
Our hero is more than ready!



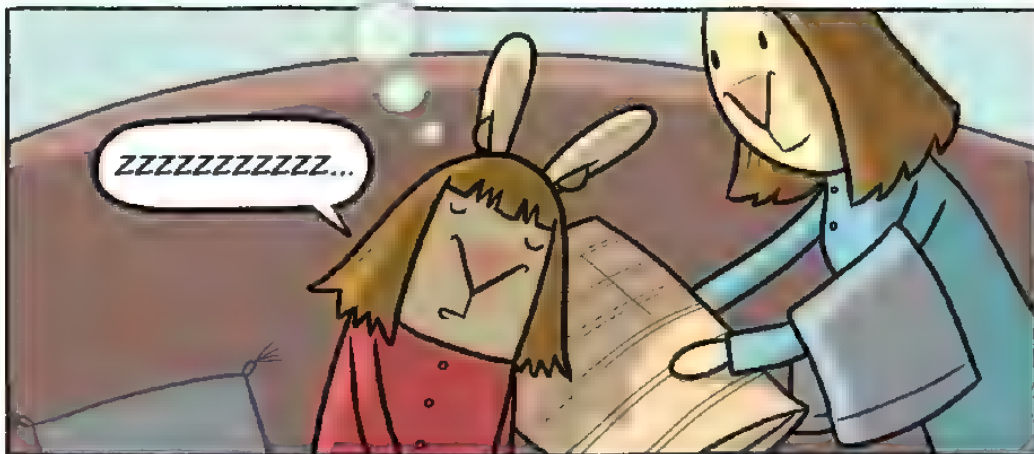
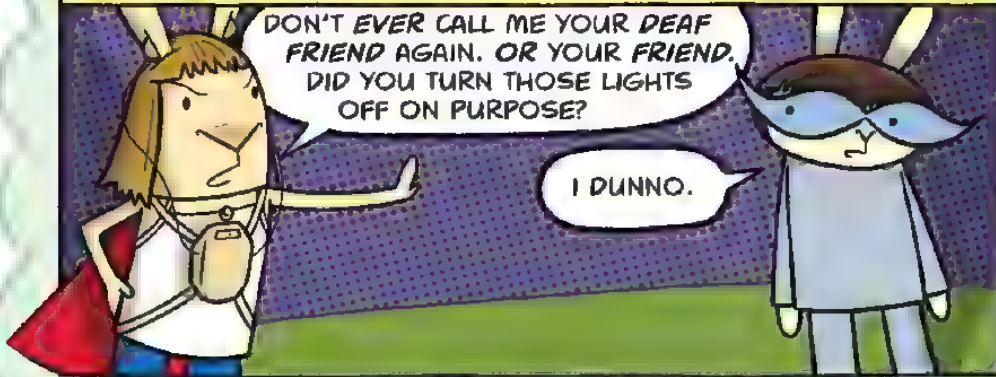
HOW ABOUT A  
MAKEOVER, MISSY?  
WHAT PLEASURE THIS  
GIVES ME, YOU'LL  
NEVER KNOW!



TA-DA!

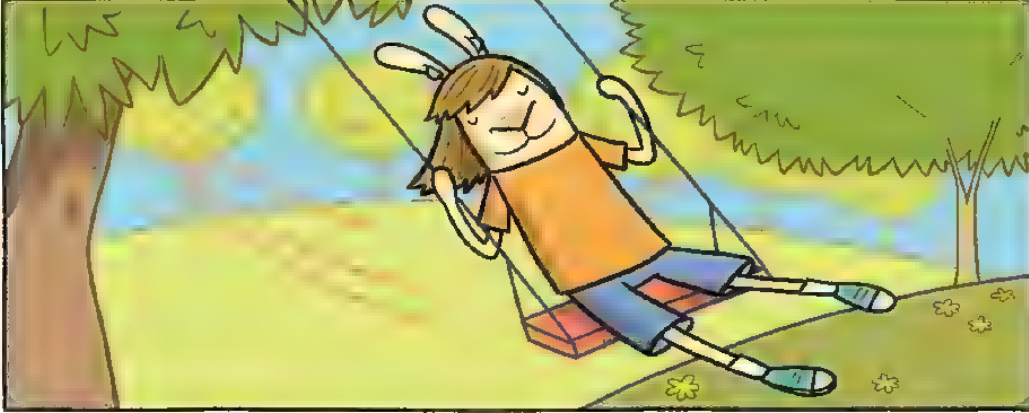


At long last, El Deafo faces the mightiest foe of all, the dastardly SuperGinny.

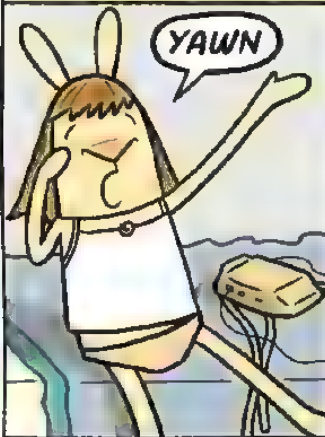




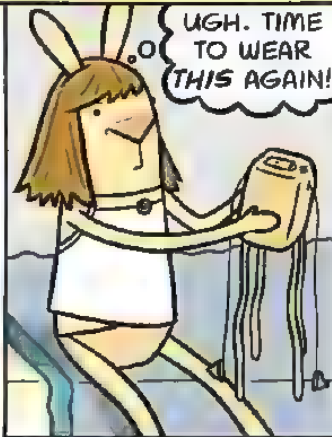
Ah, summer. Three months of freedom. Three months of bliss. Three months of not wearing the Phonic Ear.



But summer ends—as it always does—with the beginning of a new year of school.



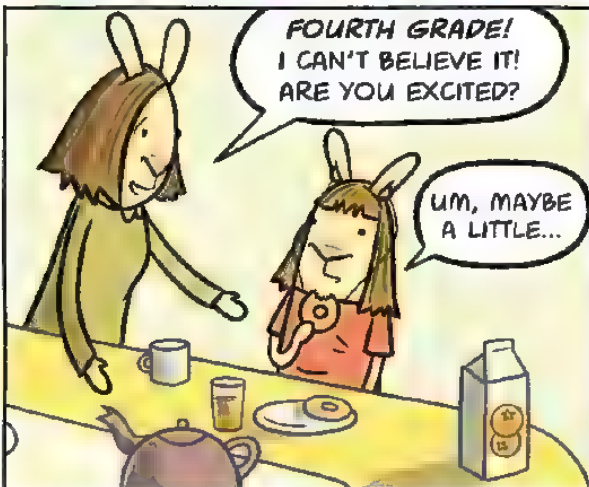
YAWN



UGH. TIME TO WEAR THIS AGAIN!



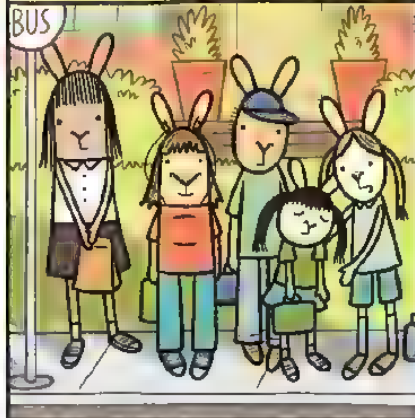
SIGH...



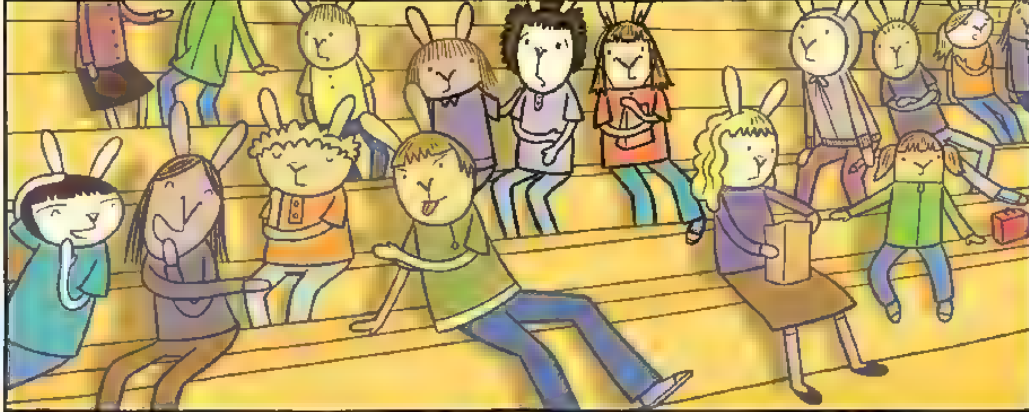
FOURTH GRADE! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! ARE YOU EXCITED?

UM, MAYBE A LITTLE...

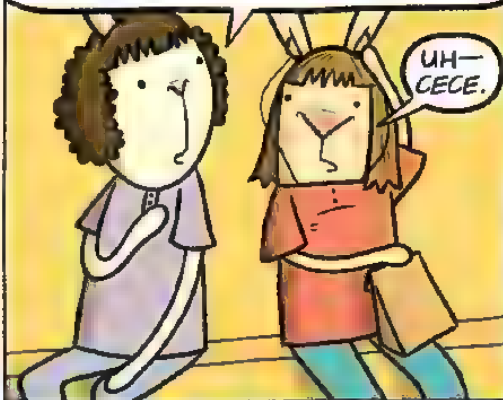
Actually, except for the Phonic Ear, I am very excited. A new year!



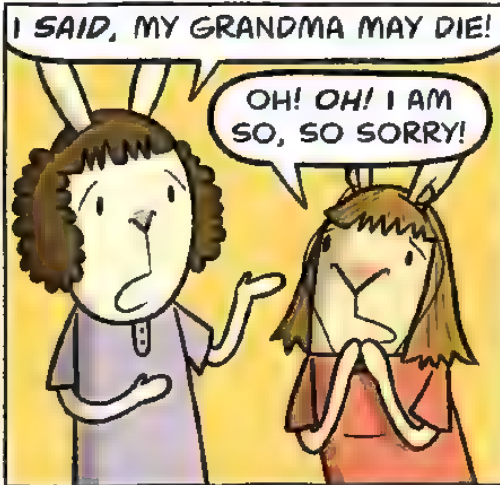
Just like in previous years, our mornings start in the gym. I see Ginny, but I avoid her. I want to sit with kids who don't know me. Maybe I can pass myself off as a hearing person.



But I'm not very good at doing this.  
HI, I'M BONNIE. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

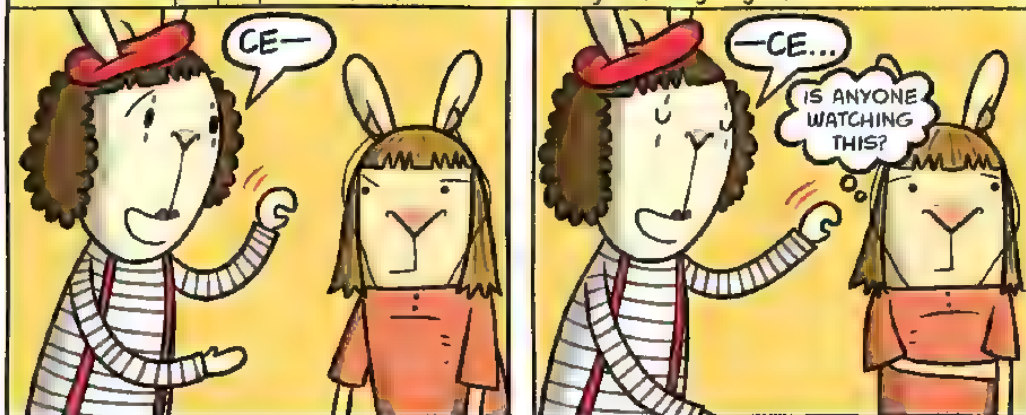


WELL, HEY. I'VE TOLD EVERYONE ELSE, SO I MIGHT AS WELL TELL YOU: MY GRANDMA MAKES PIE.





What's wrong with sign language? Nothing. But some of the people doing sign language? At me? Some people put on a real show when they start signing—almost like *mimes*!

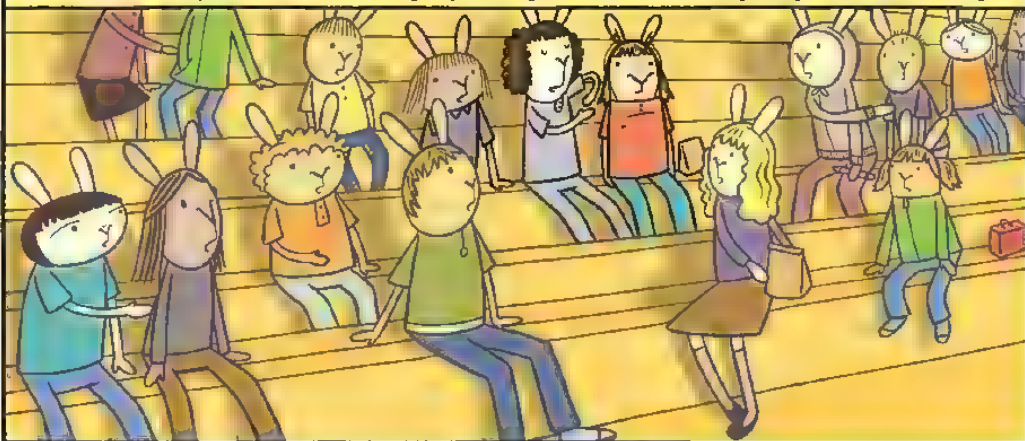




...and some people end up saying phony-baloney stuff when they sign...



...and sure enough, when somebody signs at you like that, everybody else stares at you!



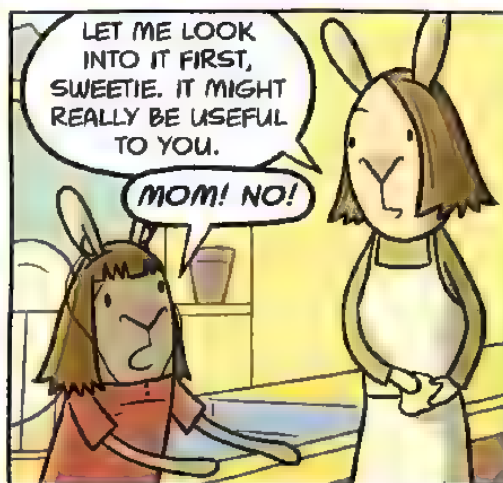
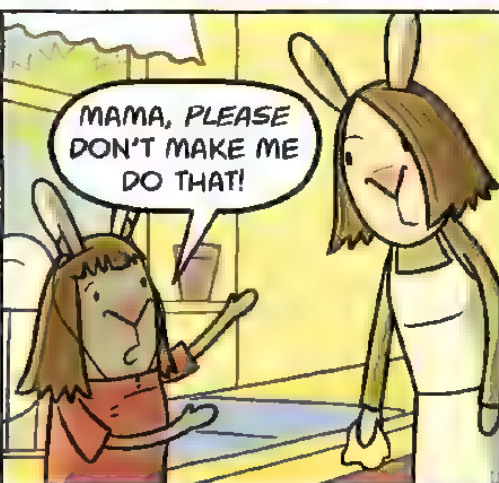
Argh! I wish I could turn into El Deafo in these situations.

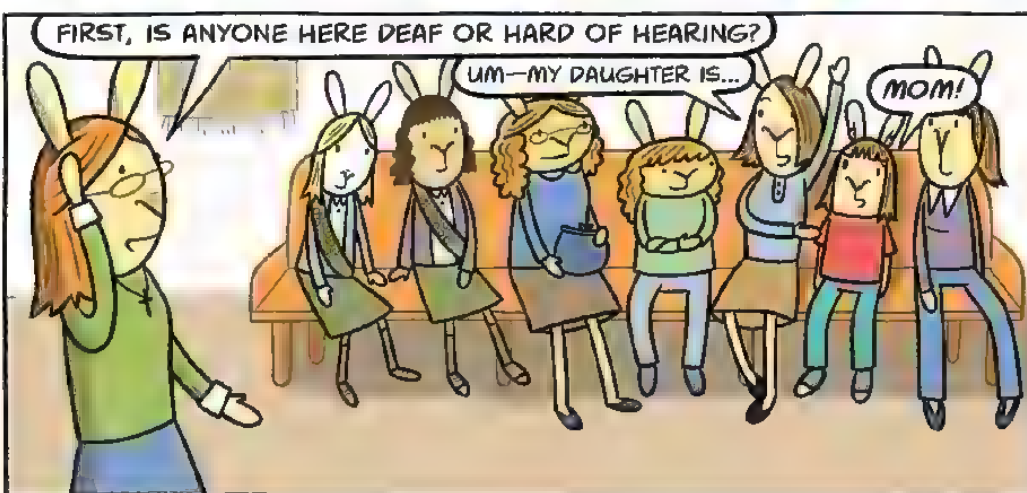
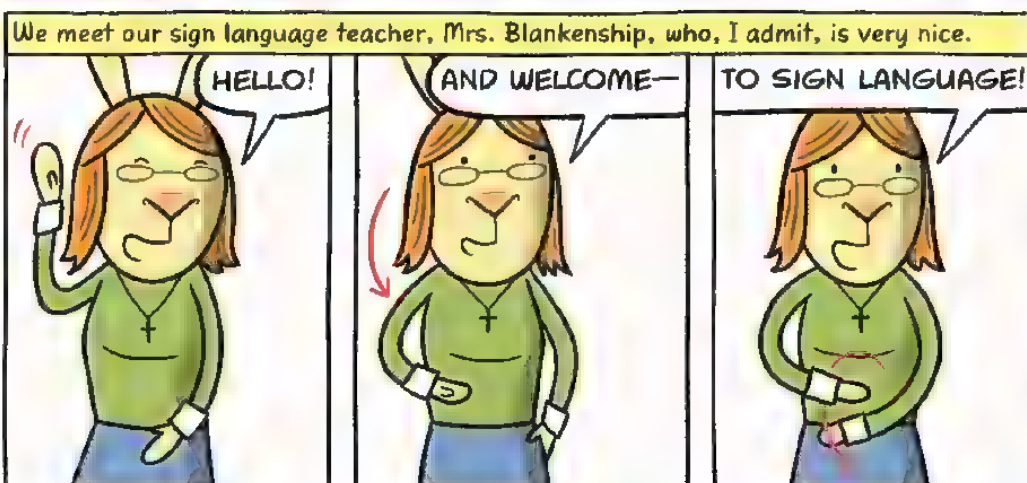
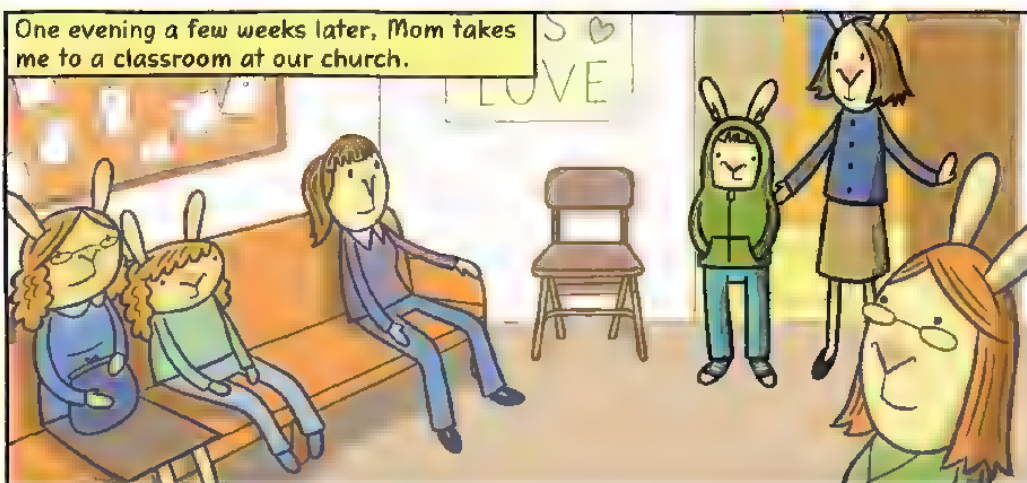


If only it were that simple.

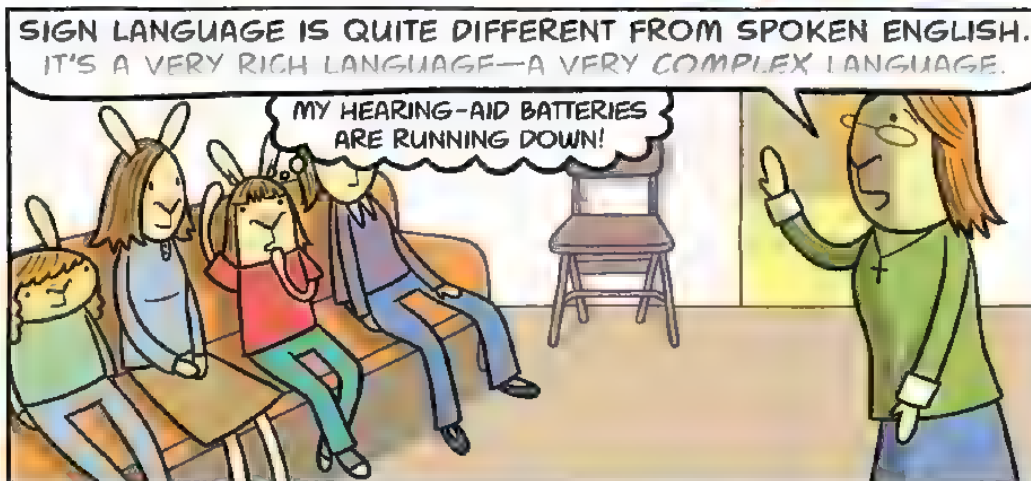


Back at home, after a long first day of school...



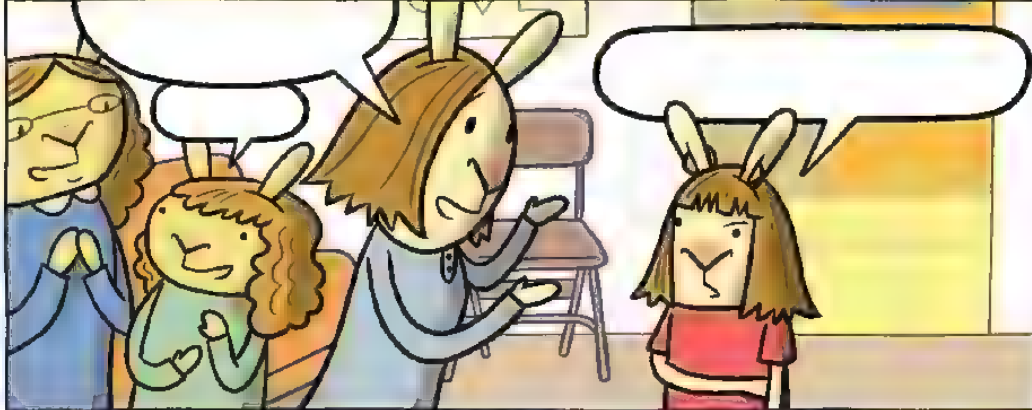




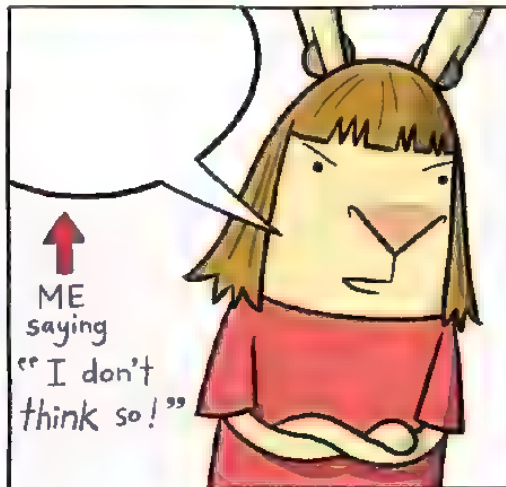




Thirty long—and silent—minutes later, the class finally ends. I lip-read my mother saying, "What did you think?" I say, "How do I know? My hearing-aid batteries ran down."

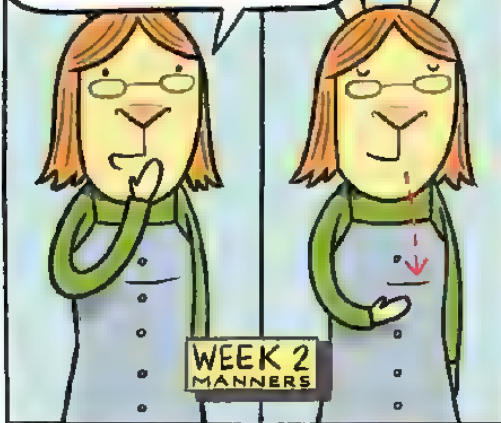


And then Mom says, "See? Maybe sign language could be useful to you after all!"



Every Thursday night, I find myself back in that dumb old classroom...

HERE IS "THANK YOU..."

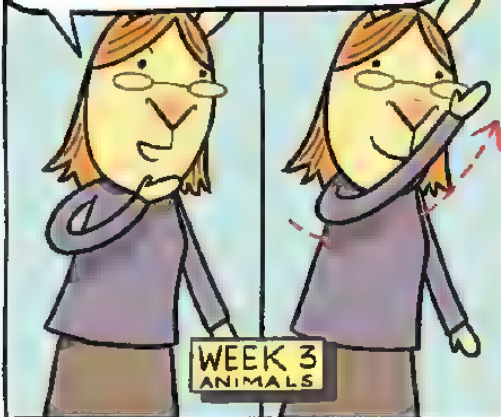


CE-CE, THANK YOU FOR BE-ING MY FRIEND!

UM...  
YEAH.



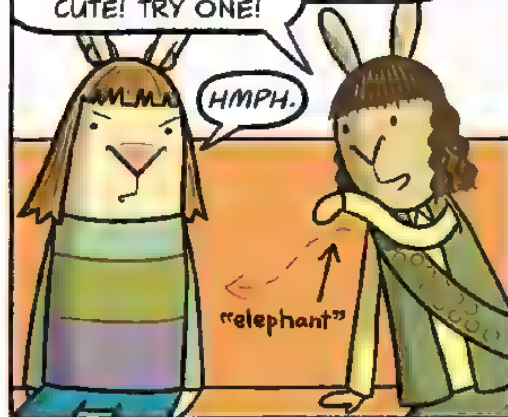
HERE'S A FUN ONE: GIRAFFE!



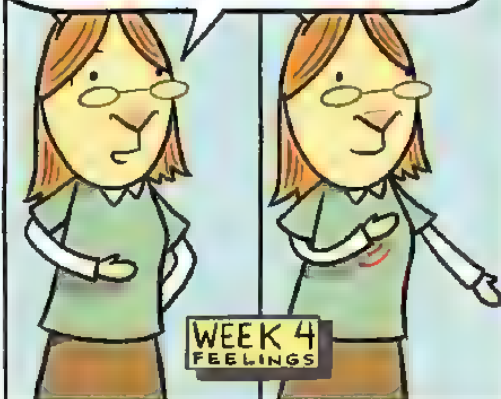
THESE ANIMAL SIGNS ARE SO CUTE! TRY ONE!

HMPH.

"elephant"



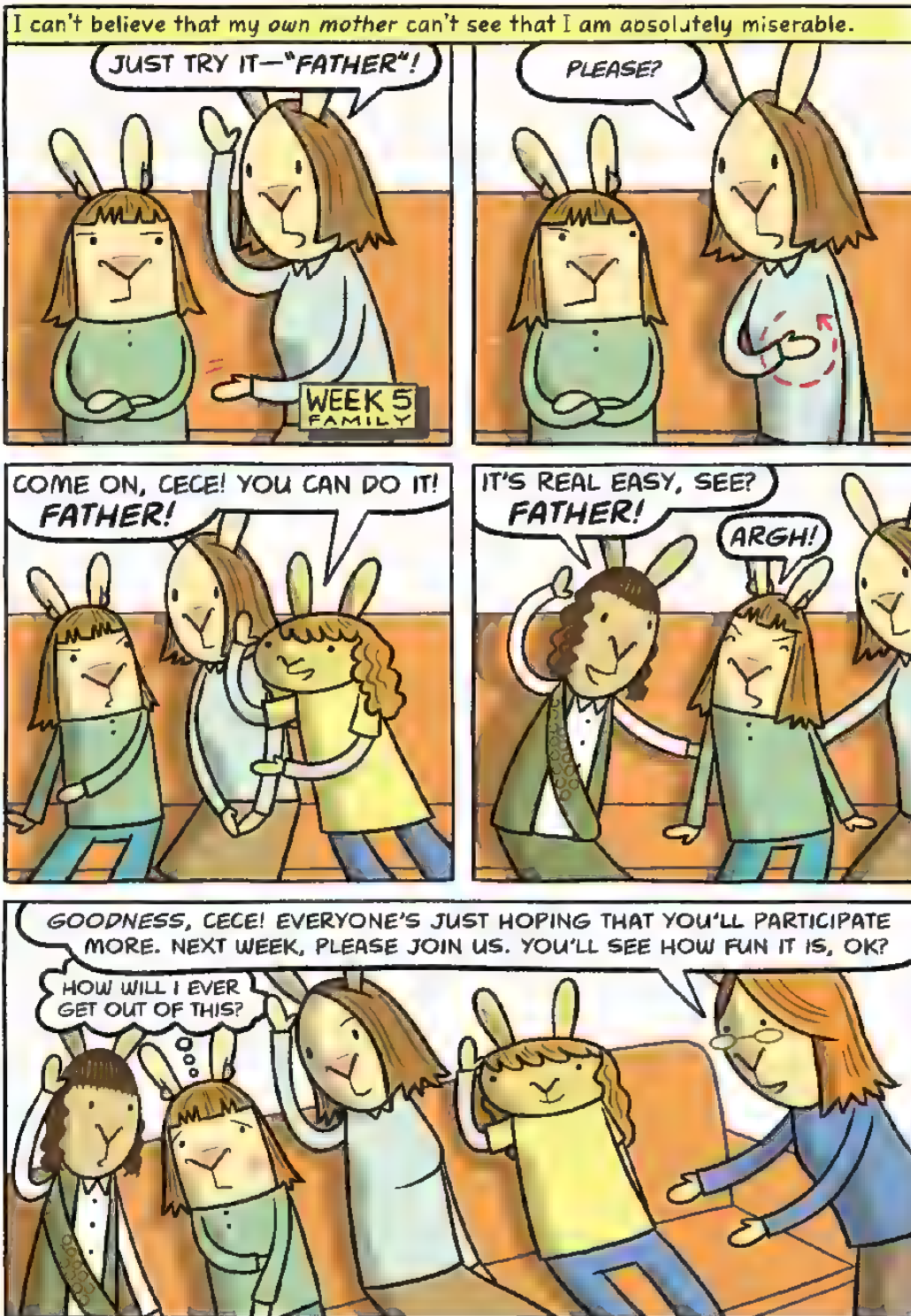
OK! LET'S PARTNER UP AND ASK EACH OTHER HOW SHE FEELS...



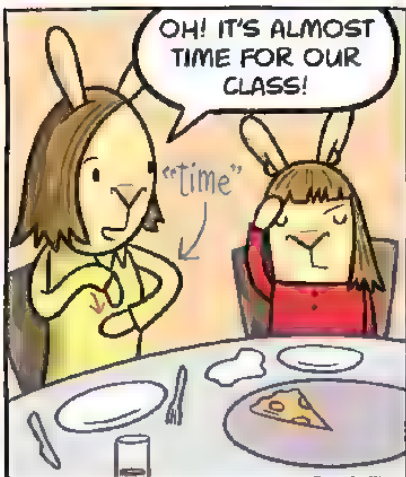
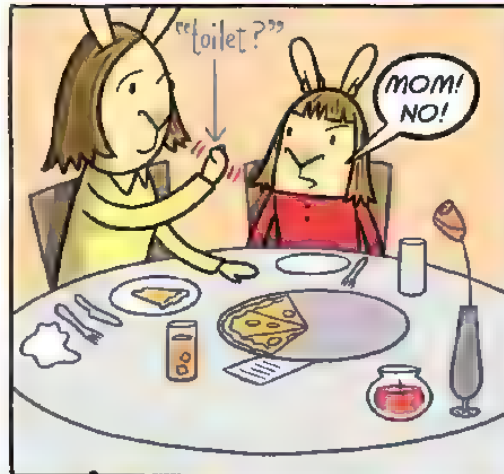
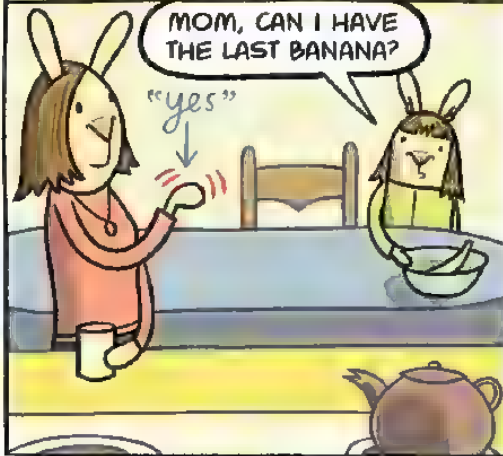
HOW AM I FEELING? TAKE A WILD GUESS.







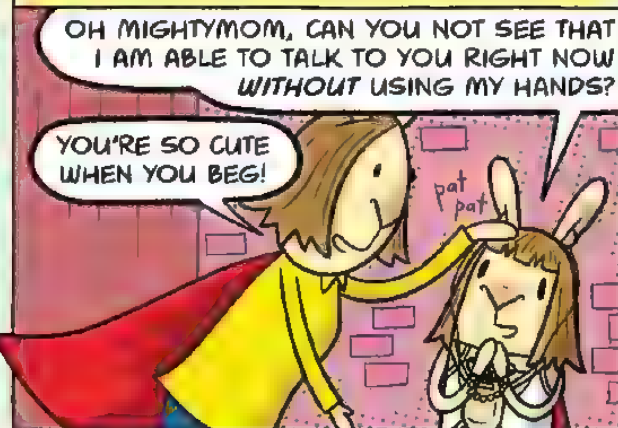
So what, I haven't been "participating." Mom totally makes up for it—she loves to sign!



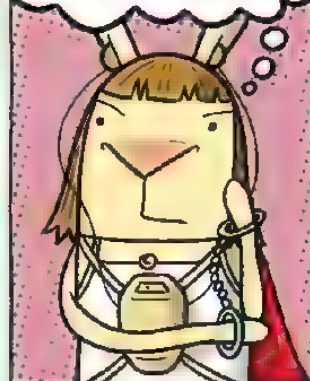
Our hero, the mighty El Deafo, has met a most worthy opponent: her own mother! How can El Deafo free herself from the shackles of this weekly humiliation?



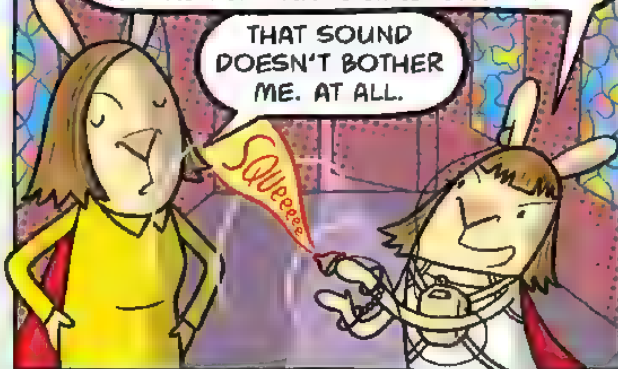
Our hero unleashes her Powers of Persuasion...



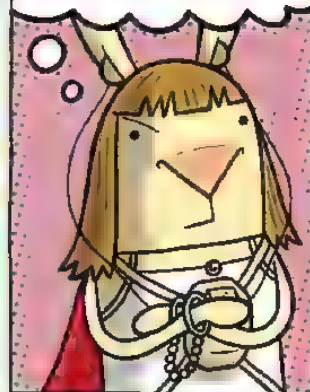
HOW DOES SHE DO THAT?



THIS VICIOUS FEEDBACK SQUEAL WILL HYPNOTIZE YOU AND YOU'LL FORGET ALL ABOUT THAT DUMB CLASS!

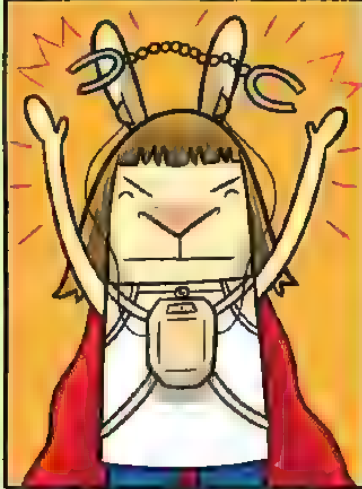


RATS. MIGHTYMOM IS AMAZING.



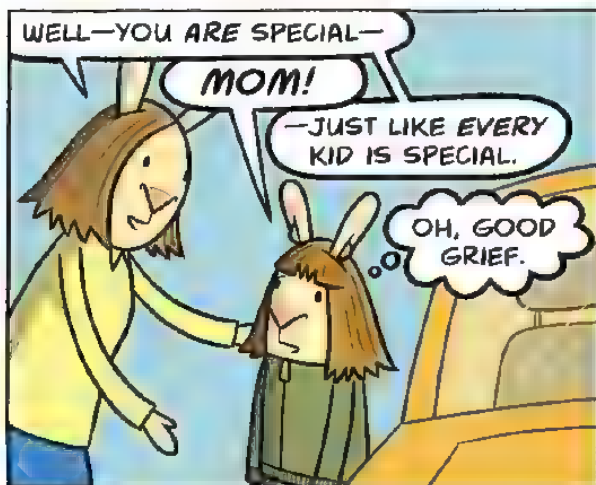


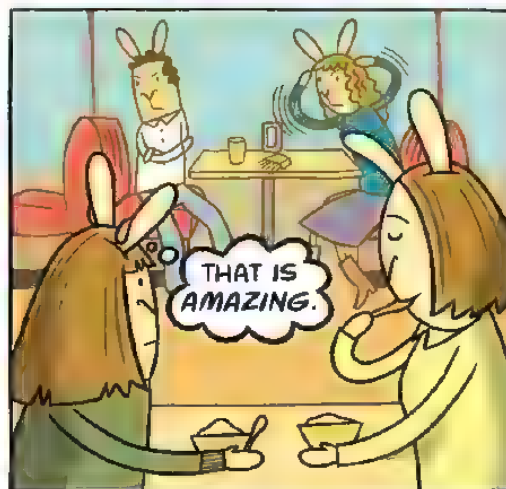
Enraged, El Deafo busts out of the handcuffs...



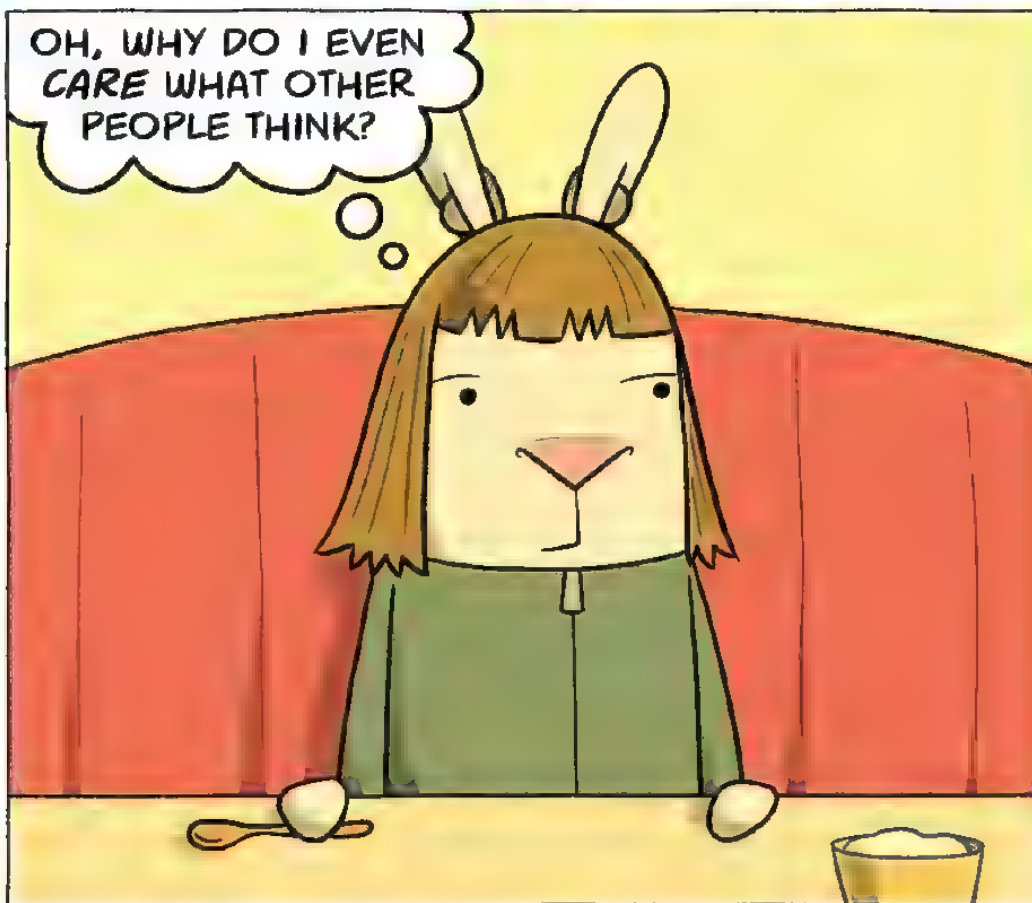
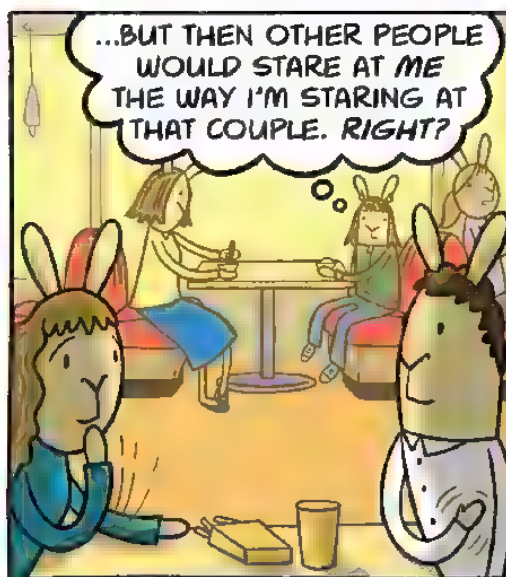
...and unfurls her torpedo-like wrath onto her own mother!



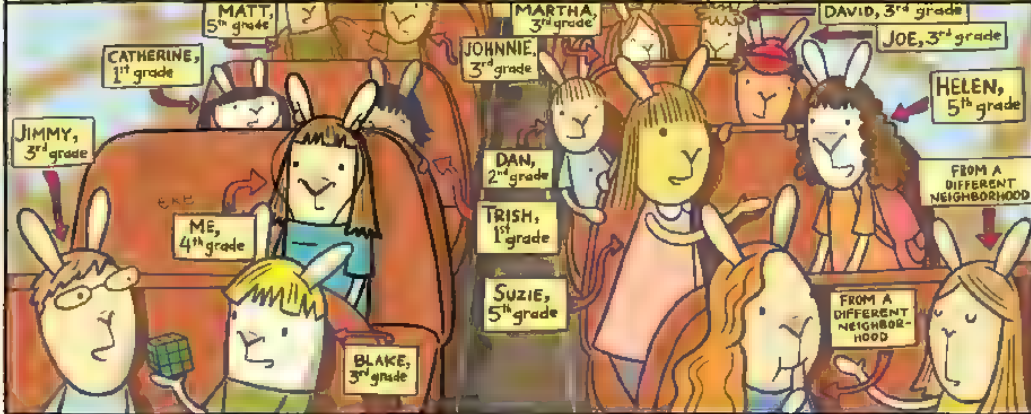




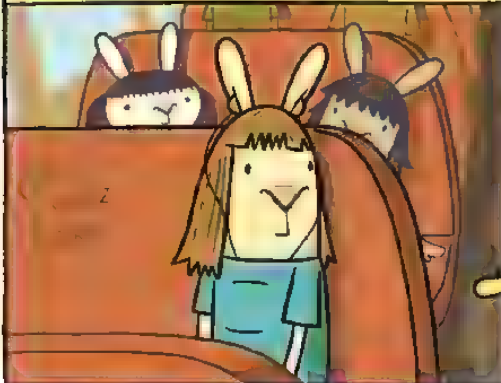




As I ride the bus home from school one day, I realize just how many kids live on my street. We practically fill up the whole bus! But not one of them is in my grade.

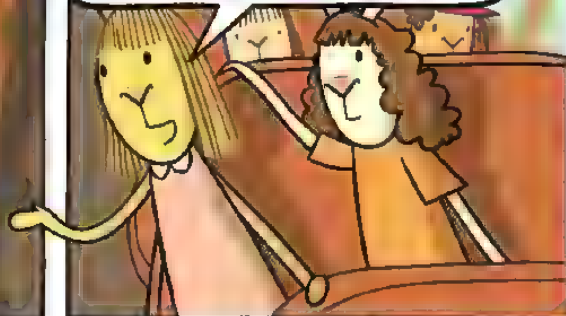


There had been a girl in my class, and we watched *The Monkees* at her house after school sometimes. But she moved away.



The other kids on the street are nice, though, especially the older ones. They often include me in their games and stuff...

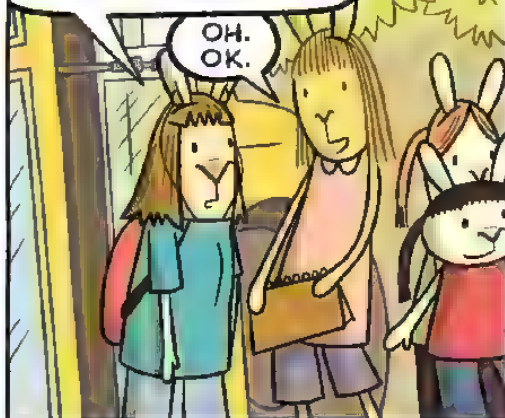
HEY, WE'RE PLAYING KICKBALL WHEN WE GET HOME. WANNA PLAY?

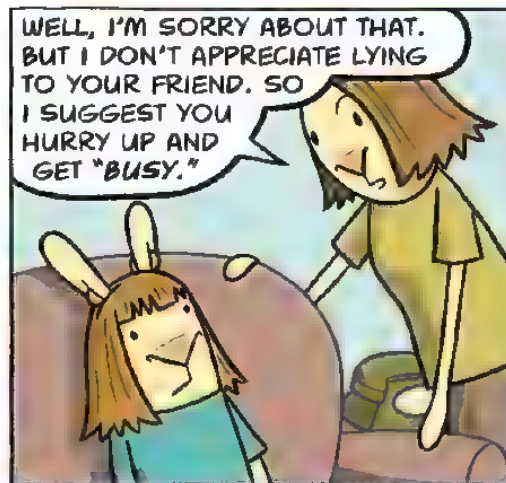
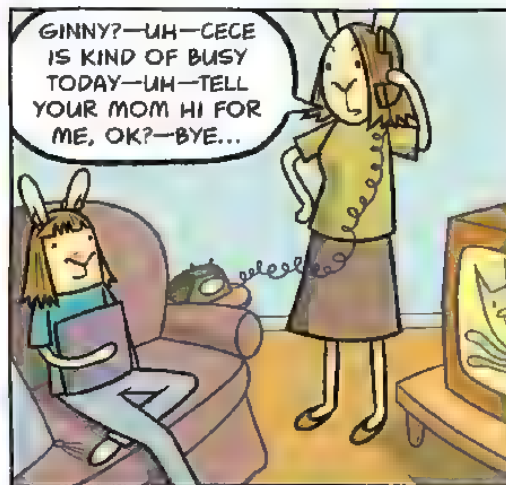
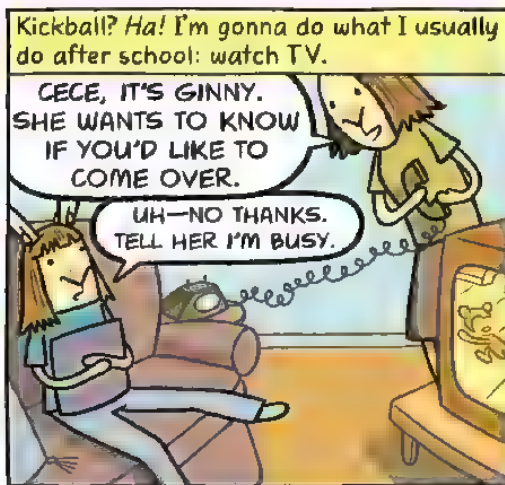


But I think they've been told to be nice to the deaf kid. And anyway, I always seem to ruin those games of theirs!

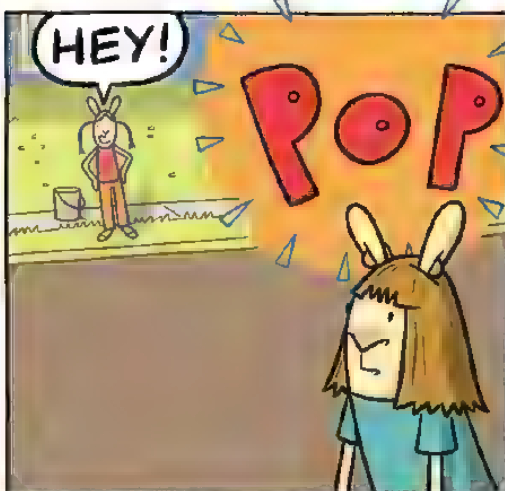
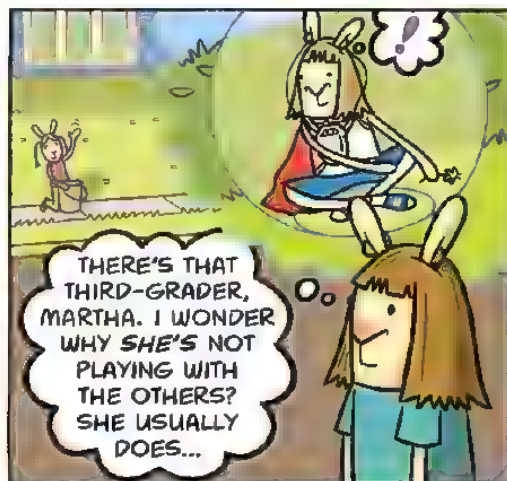
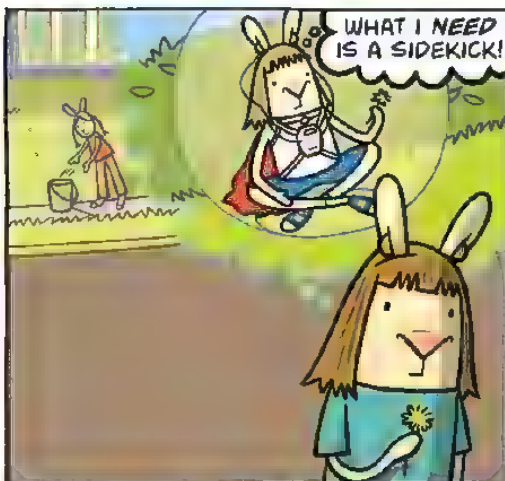
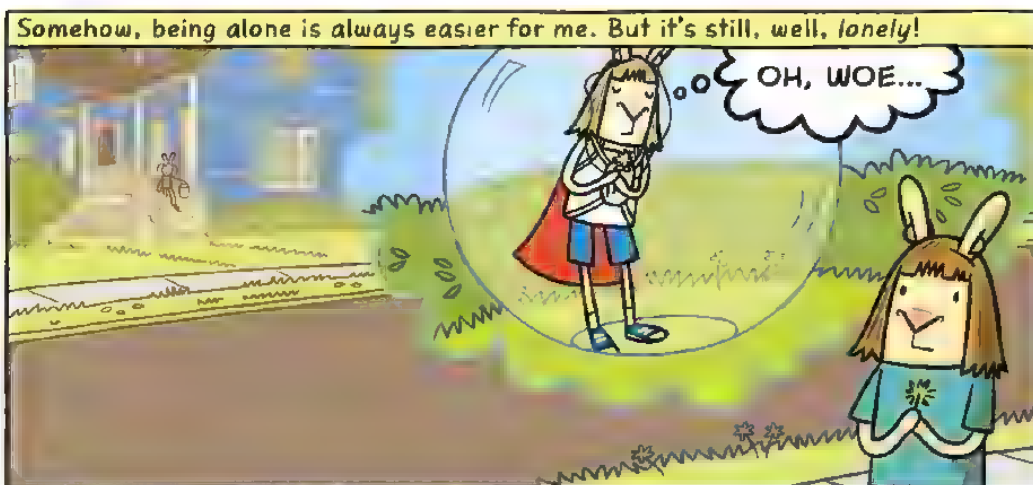


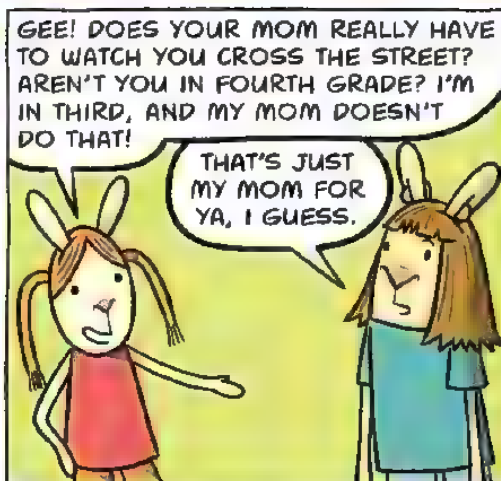
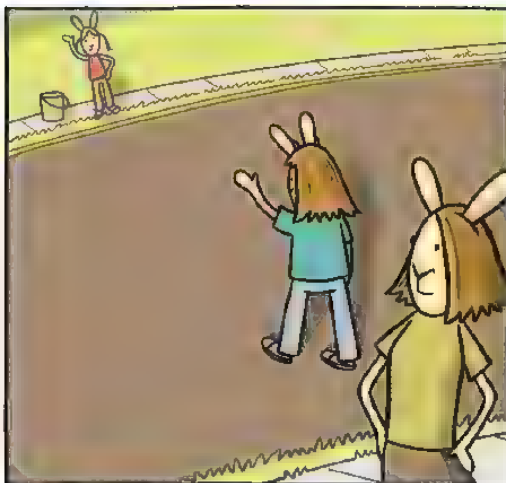
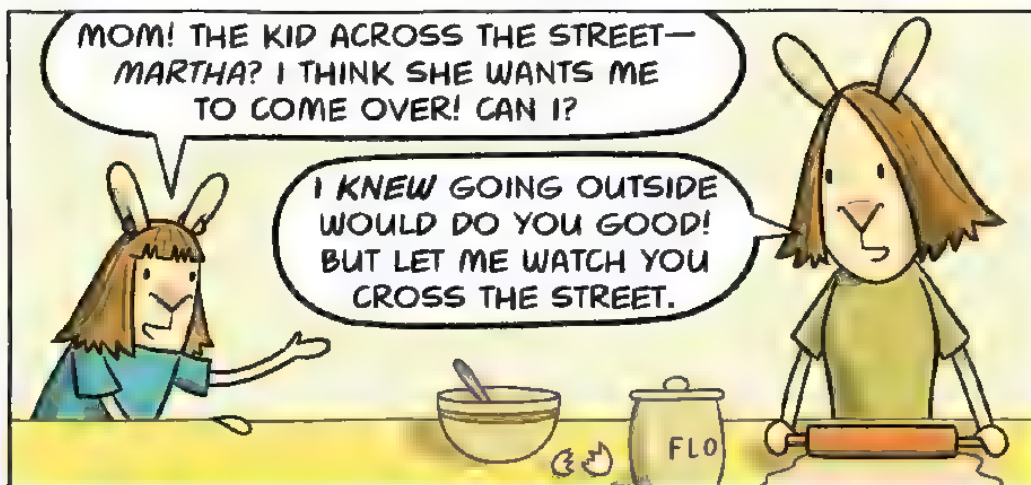
UH, THANKS. BUT I HAVE A LOT OF HOMEWORK...

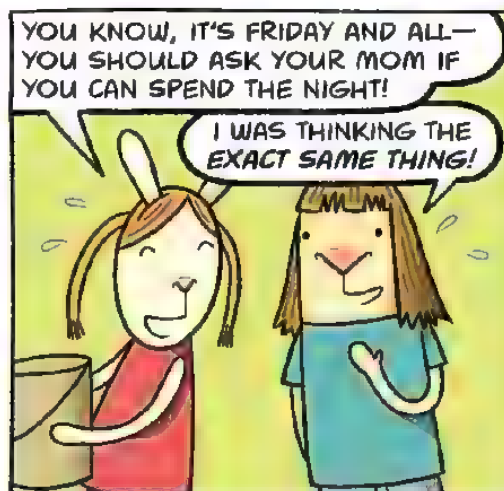
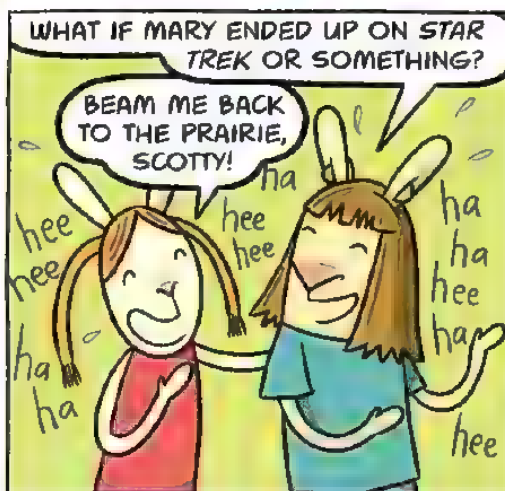
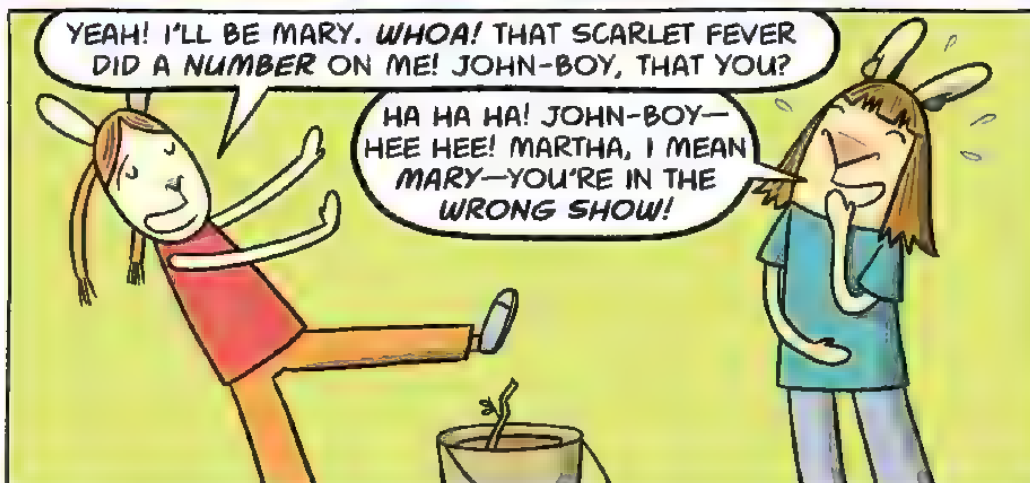








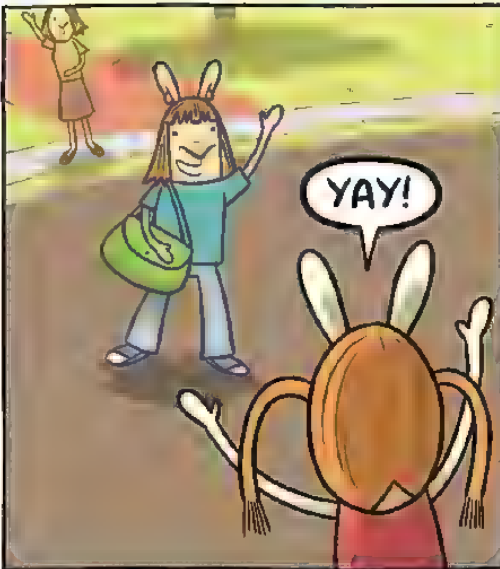


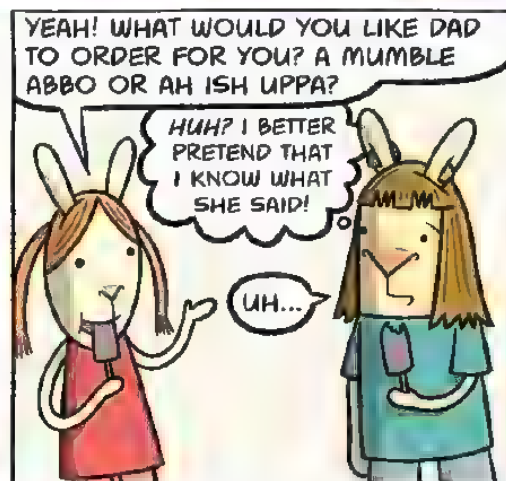
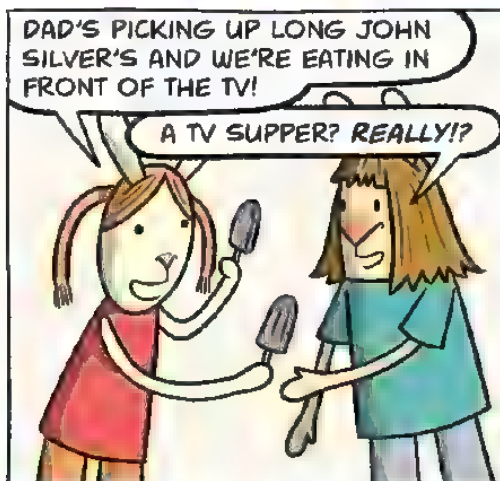
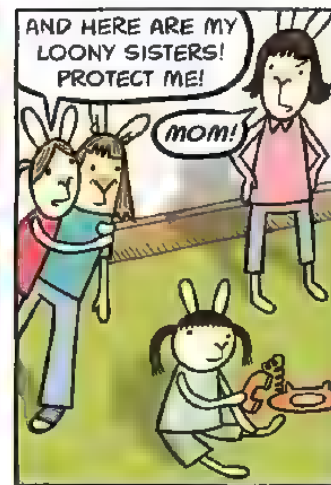




Yay! Mom said yes to the sleepover! I start packing—and I start thinking, too.

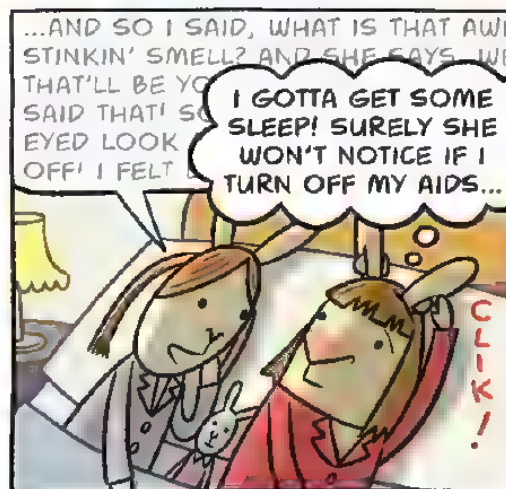
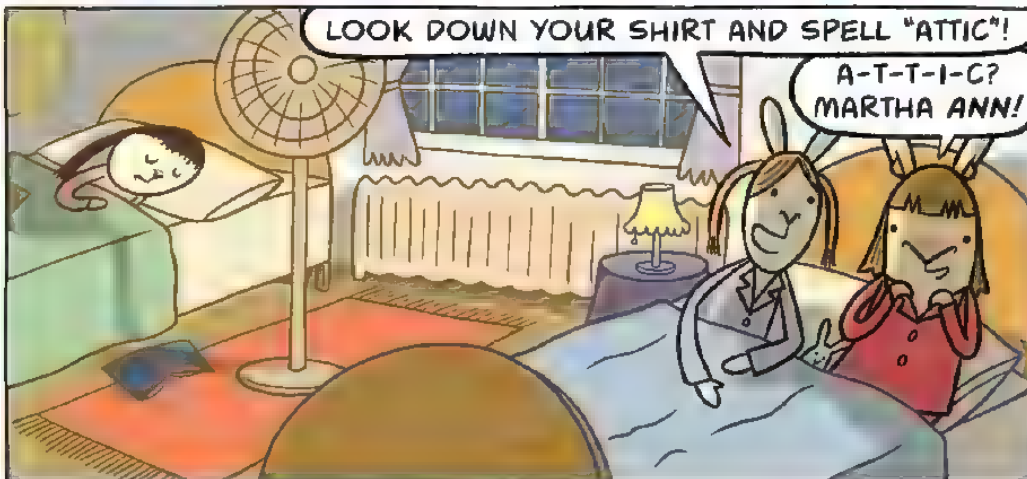
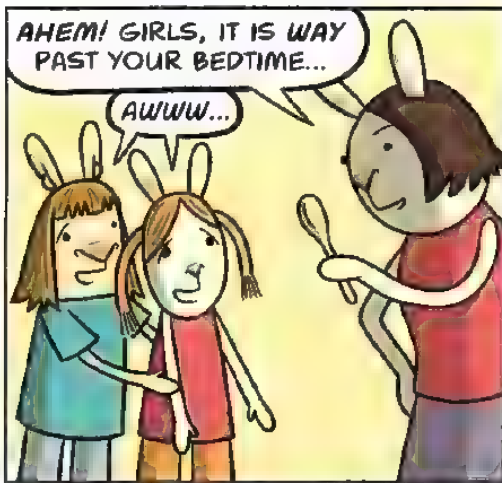
MARTHA IS SO FUNNY! I'M ACTUALLY GLAD SHE'S NOT IN MY GRADE, BECAUSE IF SHE WAS, SHE'D SEE MY GIANT HEARING-AID AND THOSE CORDS COMING OUT OF MY EARS. SHE'D KNOW I WAS DEAF. BUT SHE *DOESN'T* KNOW, BECAUSE SHE HASN'T NOTICED MY BEHIND-THE-EAR AIDS. WELL, I *THINK* SHE HASN'T NOTICED. I MEAN, SHE DOESN'T SHOUT AT ME, OR MOVE HER MOUTH ALL FUNNY, OR TRY TO SIGN AT ME. SHE'S NOT BOSSY, EITHER! NO WAY AM I GONNA LET HER FIND OUT. IT MIGHT RUIN *EVERYTHING*! OH, WE'RE GONNA HAVE SO MUCH FUN TONIGHT!

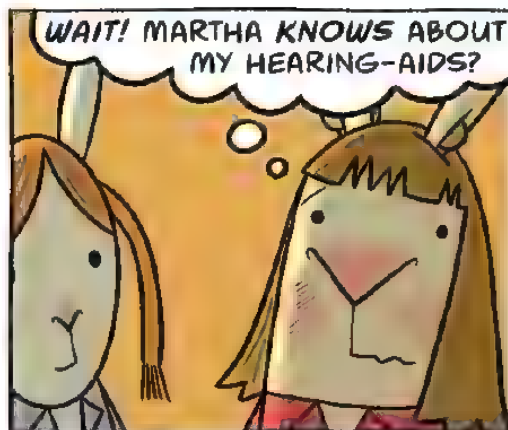
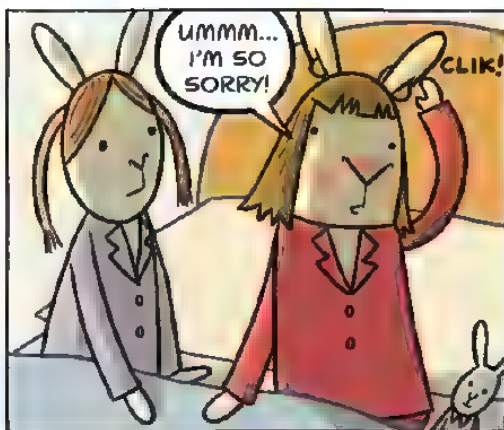
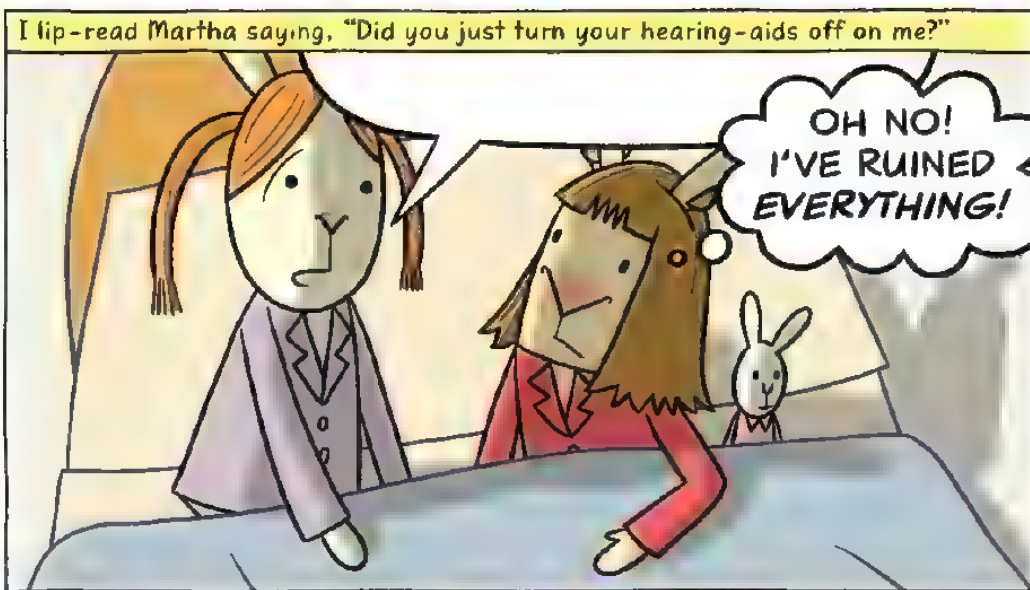
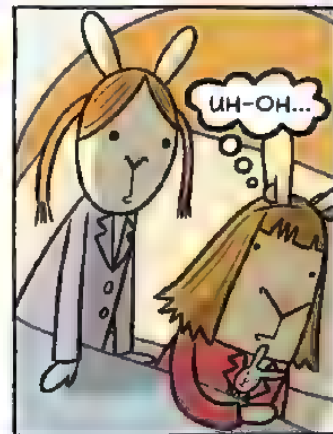
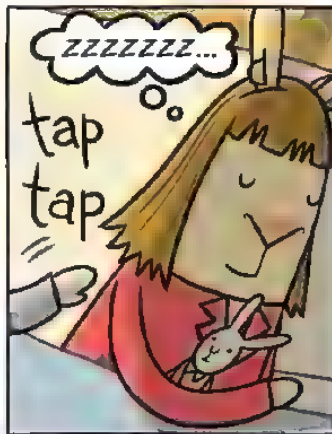


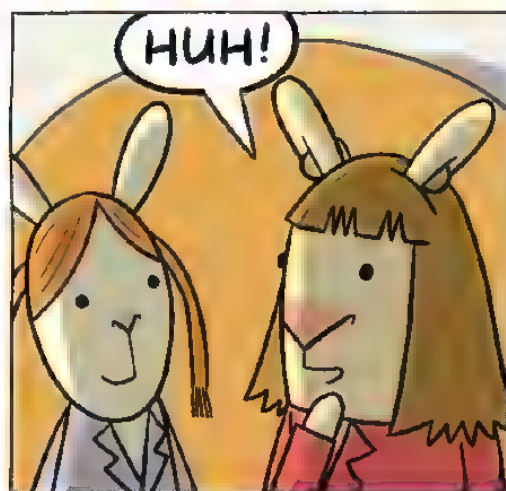
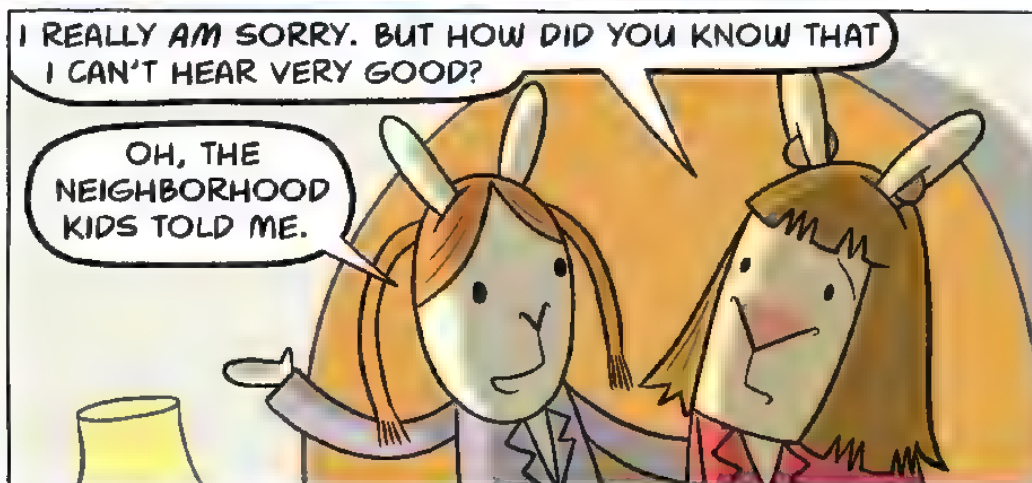




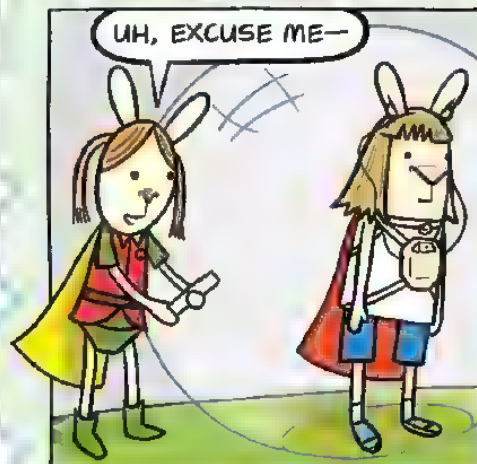
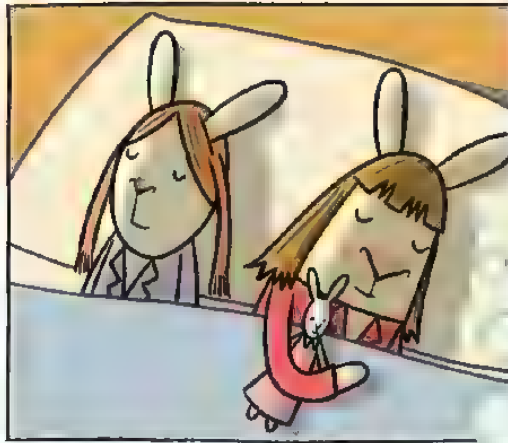








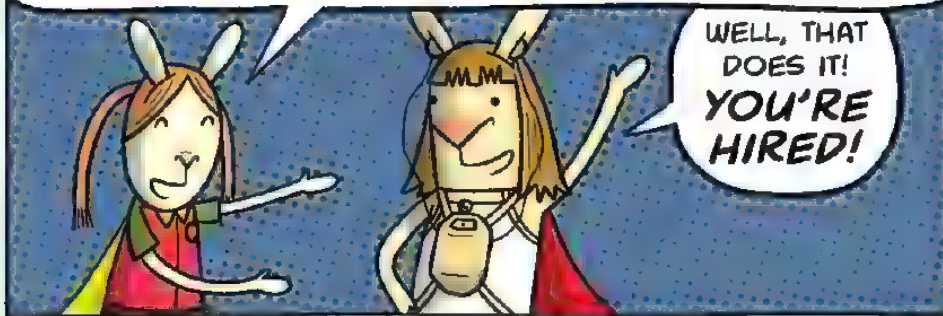




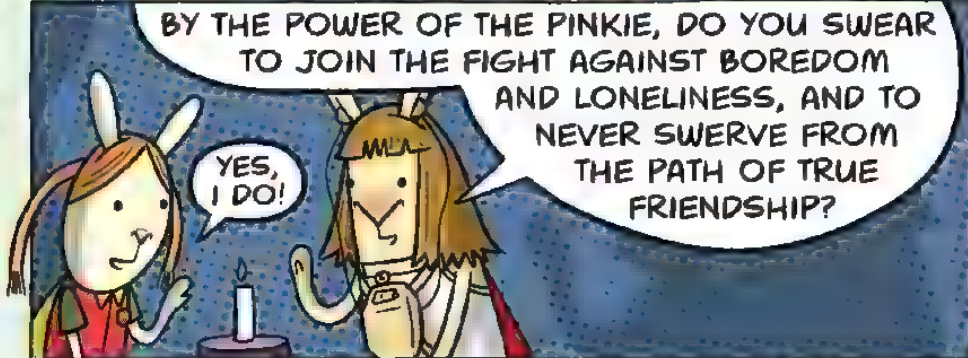
POP



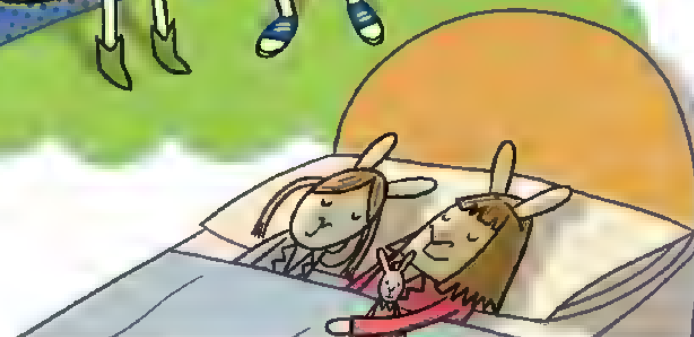
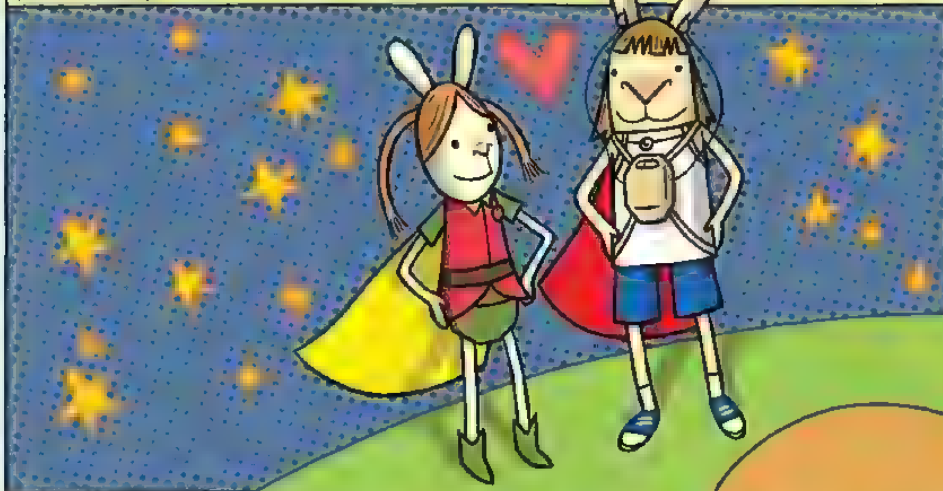
AND I CAN MAKE YOU LAUGH UNTIL YOU PEE IN YOUR PANTS!

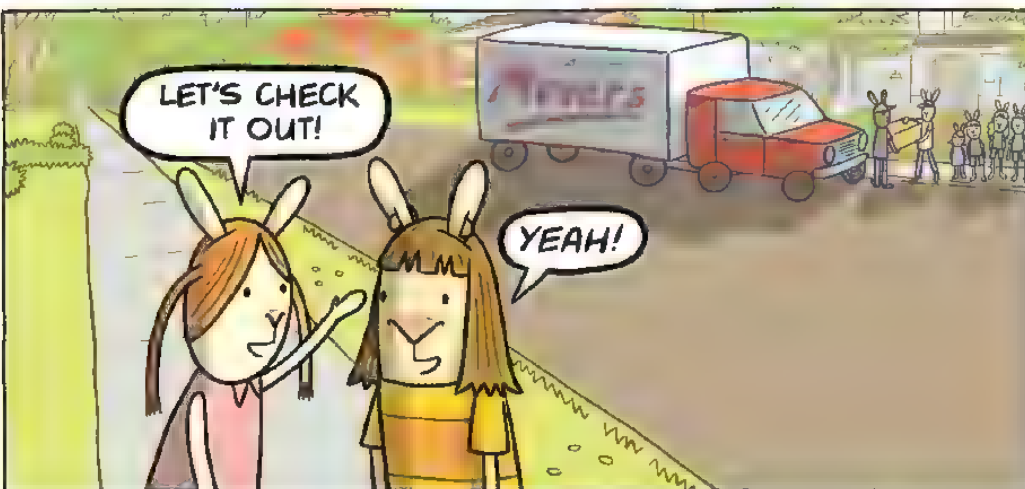
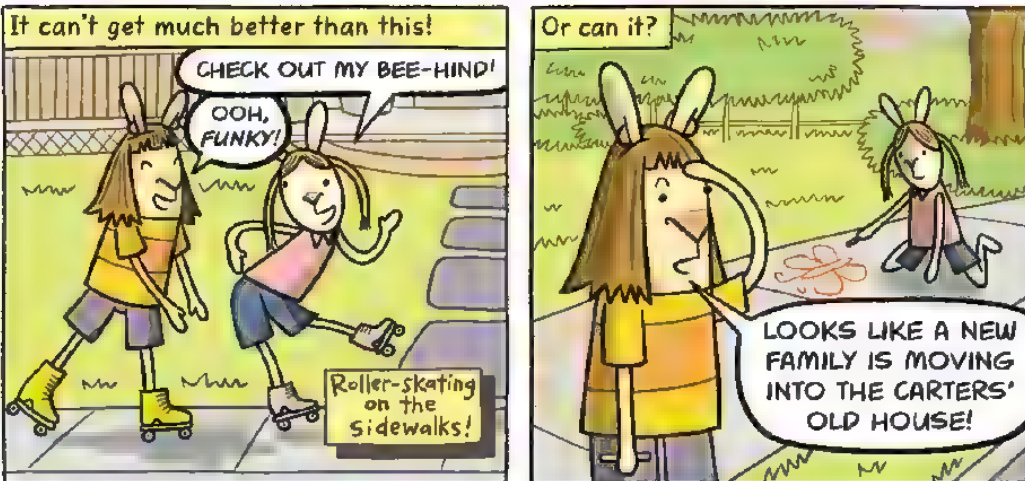
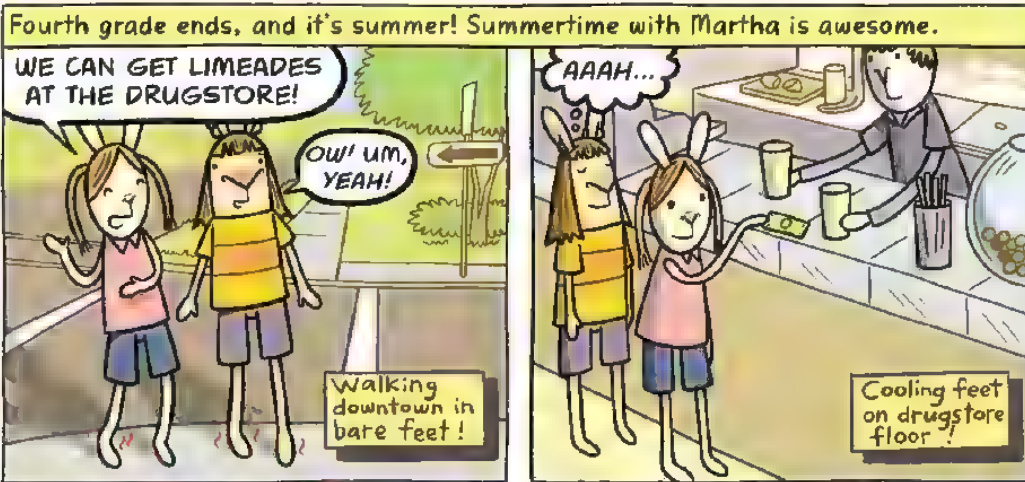


BY THE POWER OF THE PINKIE, DO YOU SWEAR TO JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST BOREDOM AND LONELINESS, AND TO NEVER SWERVE FROM THE PATH OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP?

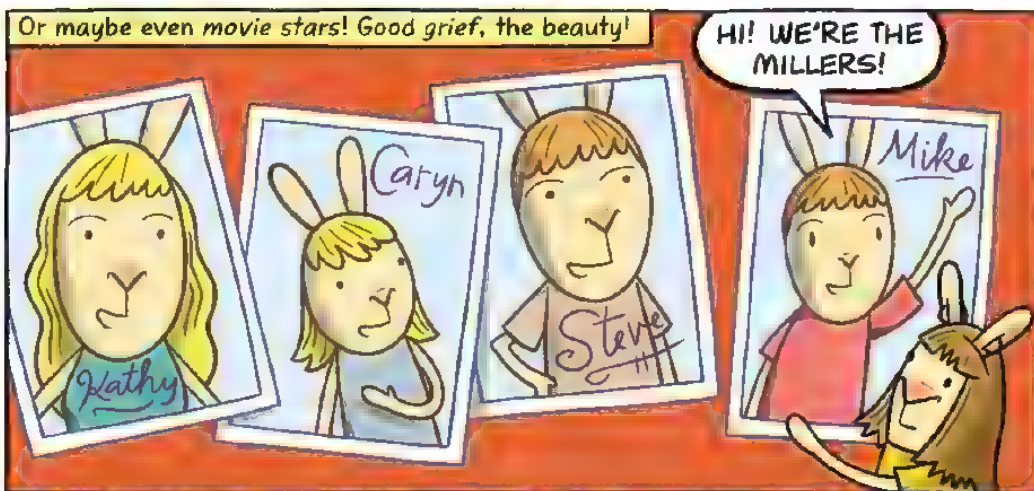
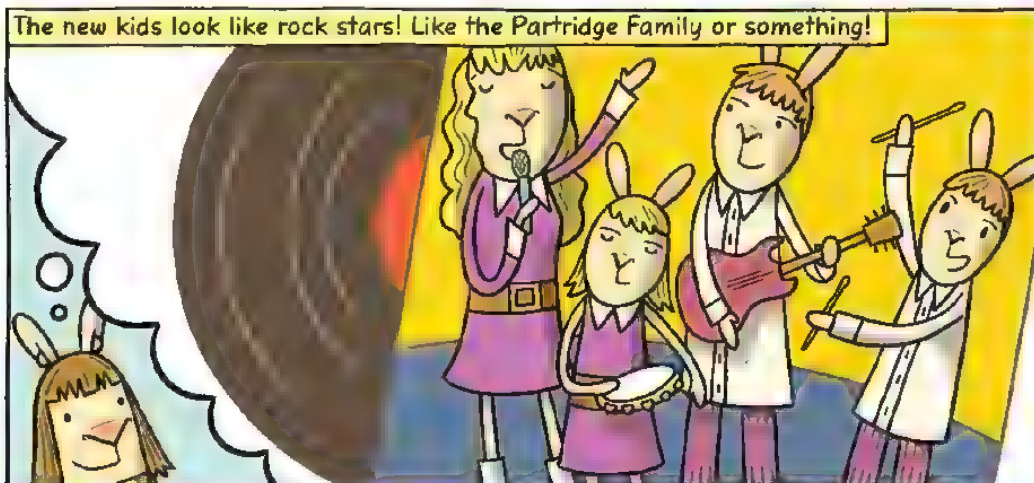
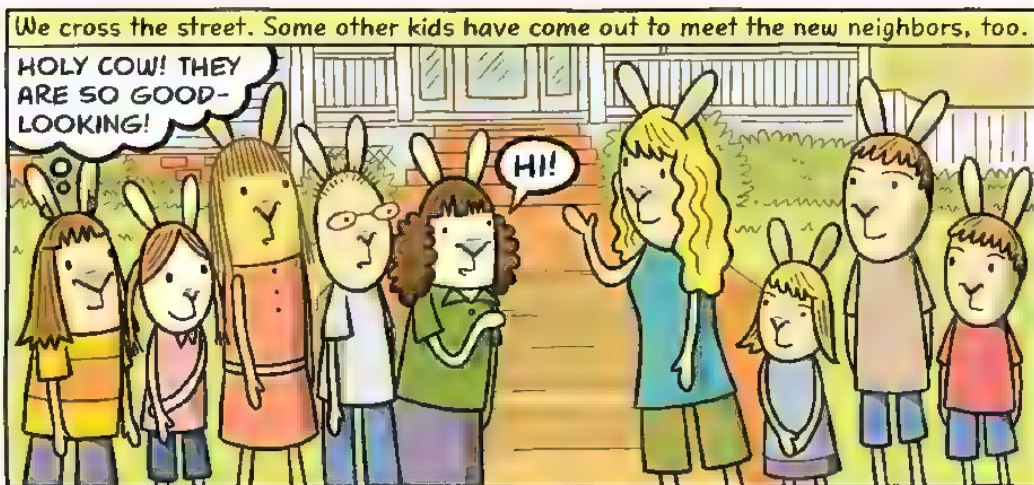


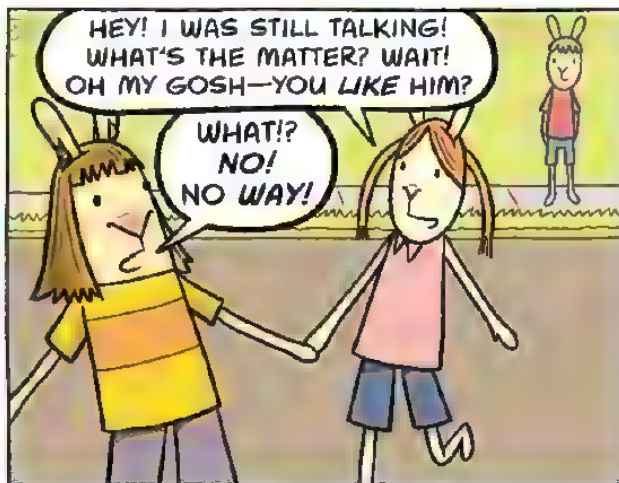
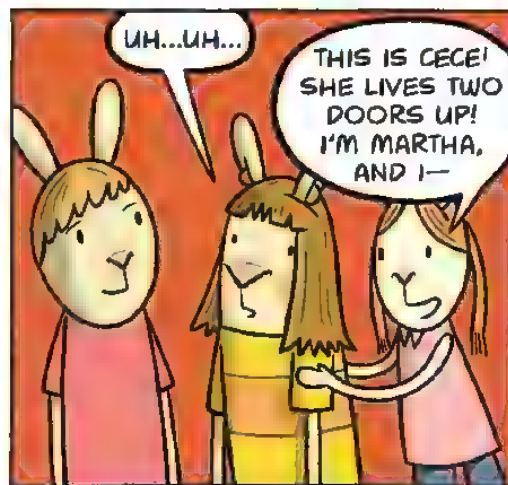
And thus, Martha Claytor, by the hand of fate, is transformed into that most glorious superhero of all, the True Friend.



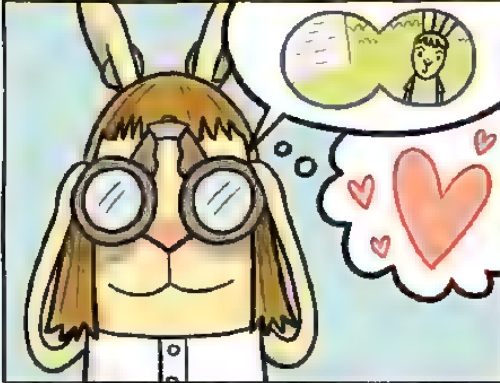








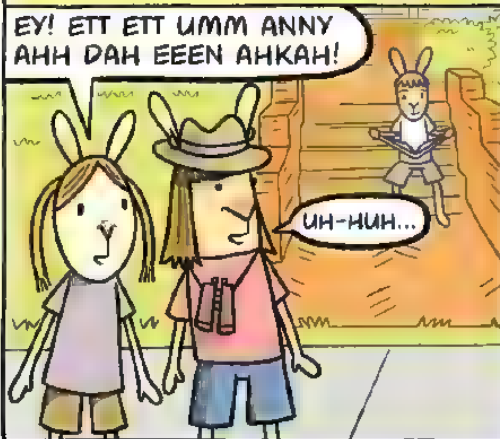
Martha is sorta right. But I'm not going to tell her—or anyone else—that I like this *Mike Miller* very much.



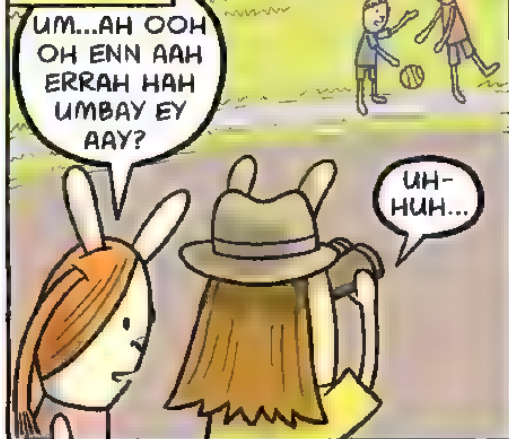
Instead, I decide to spy on him. I want to learn everything about him—but *secretly*!



I watch Mike Miller very carefully. Day...



...after day...



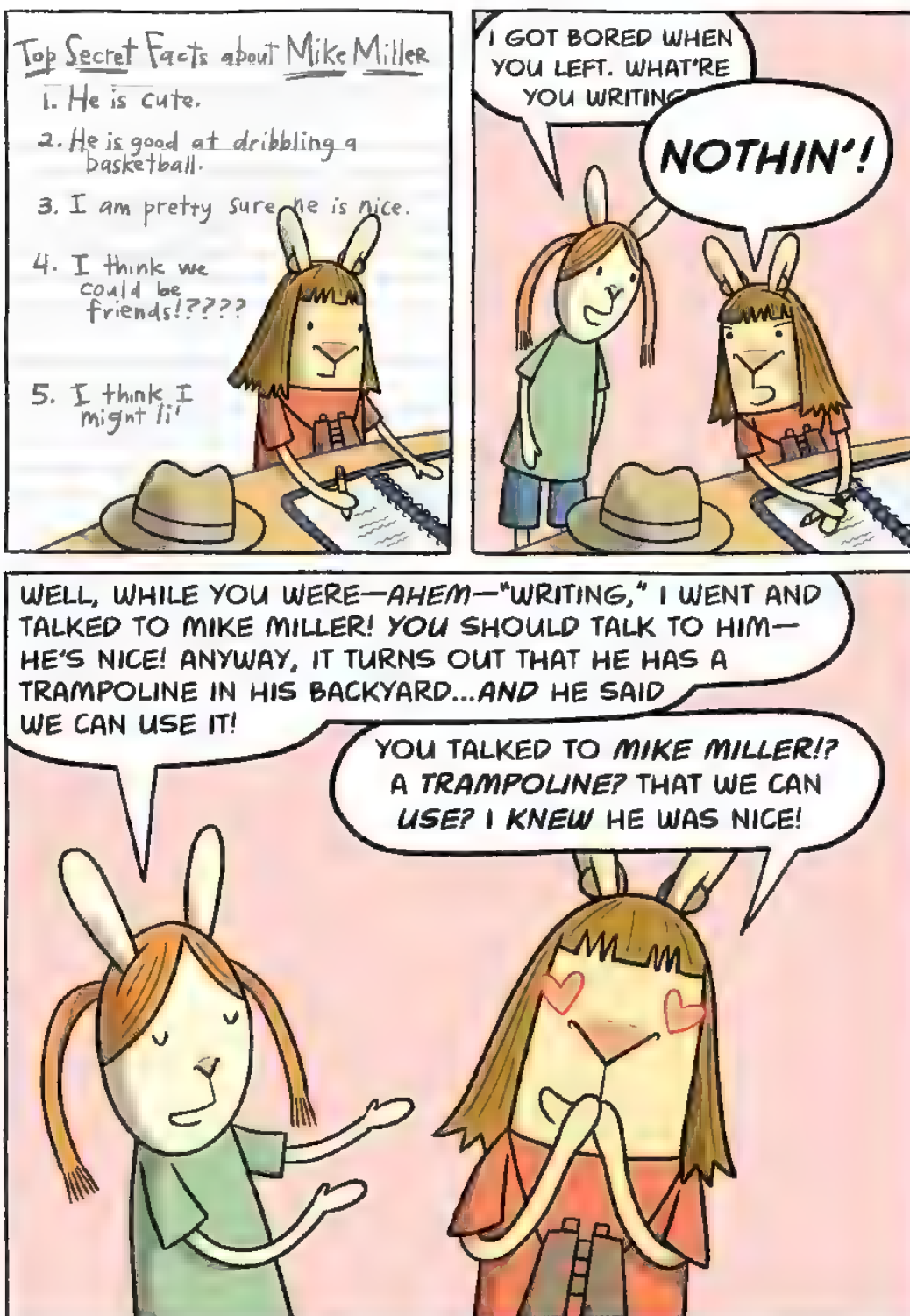
...after day!

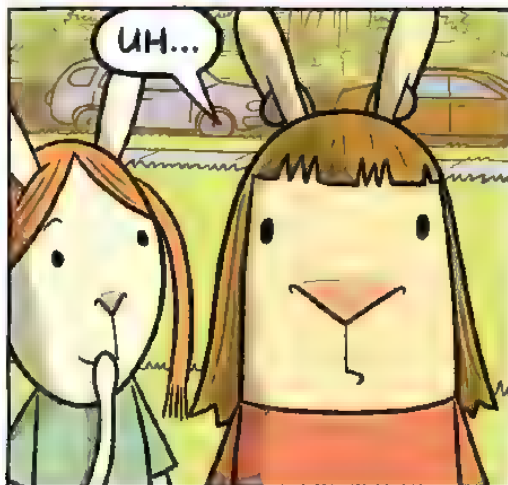
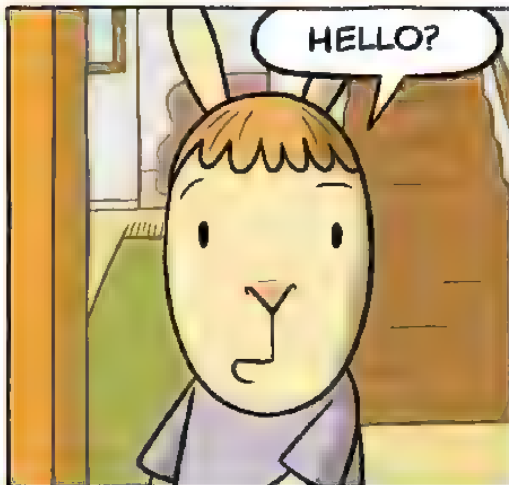


UH...I GOTTA GO. I WANNA WRITE SOMETHING DOWN...





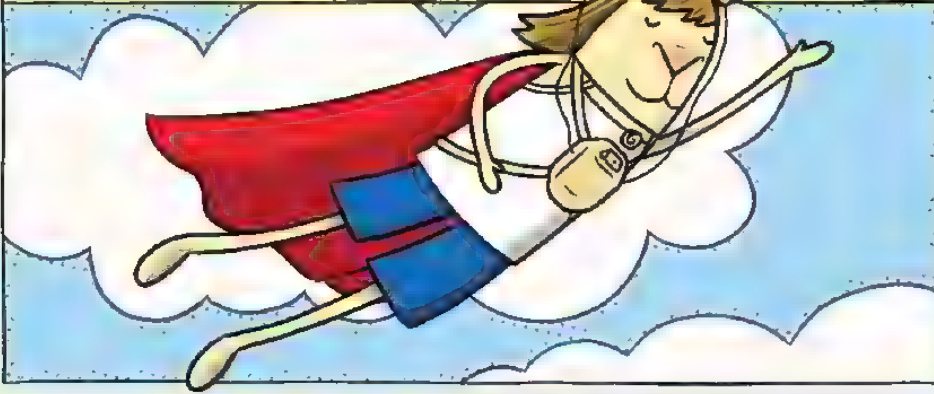








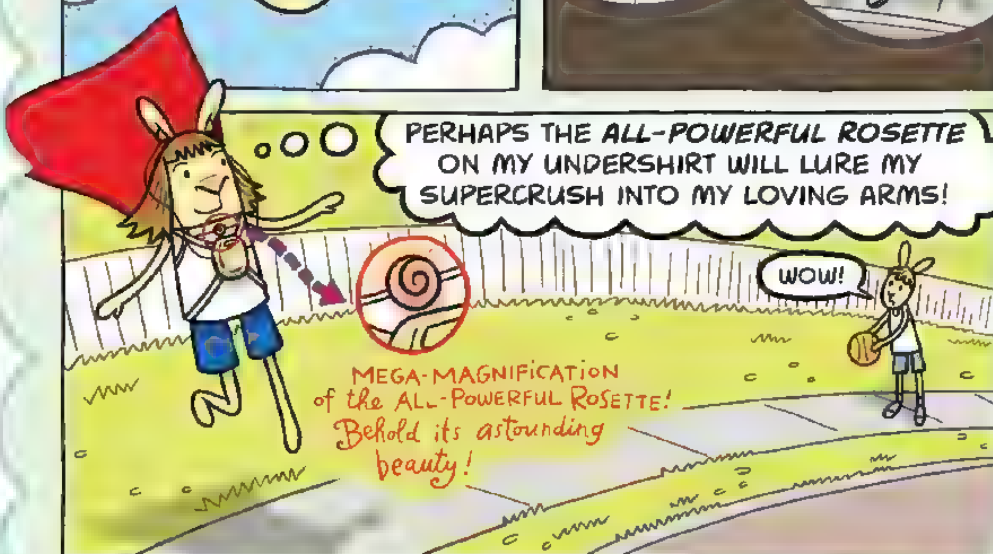
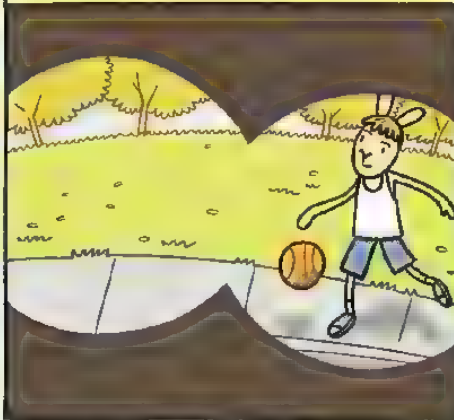
A magnificent jump off the trampoline—and El Deafo is suddenly soaring through the air!

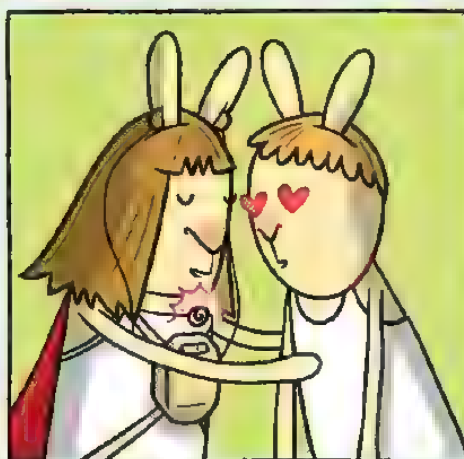
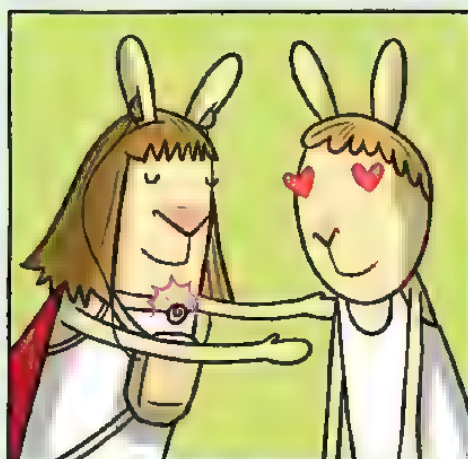
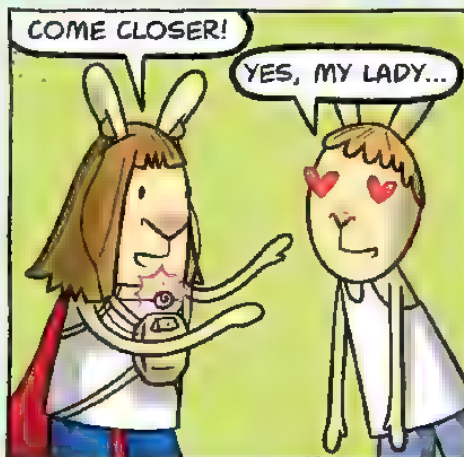
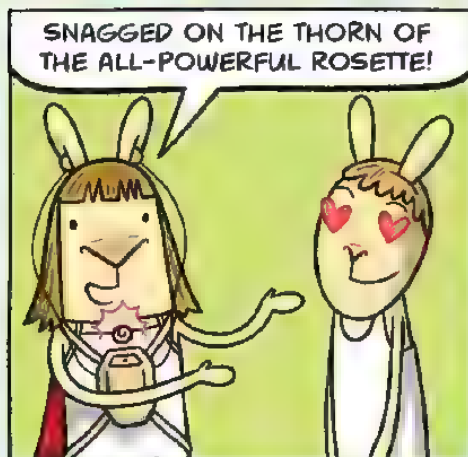
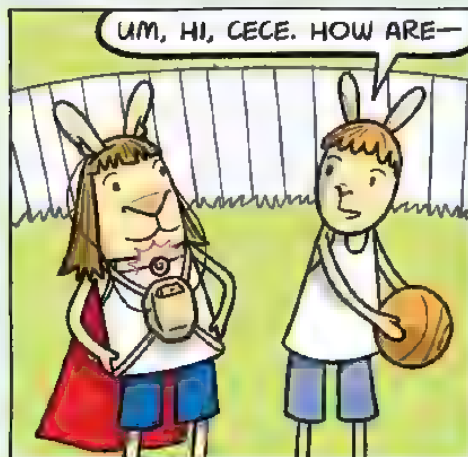


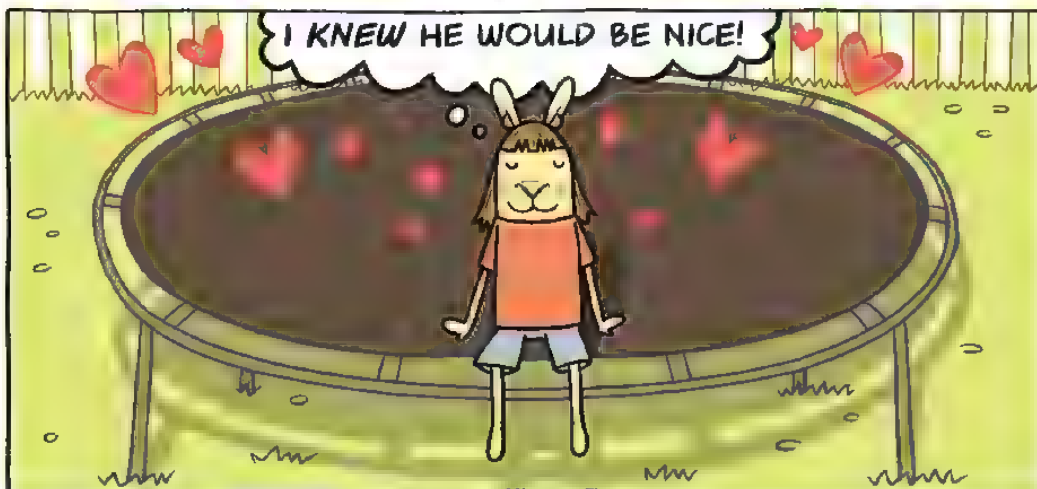
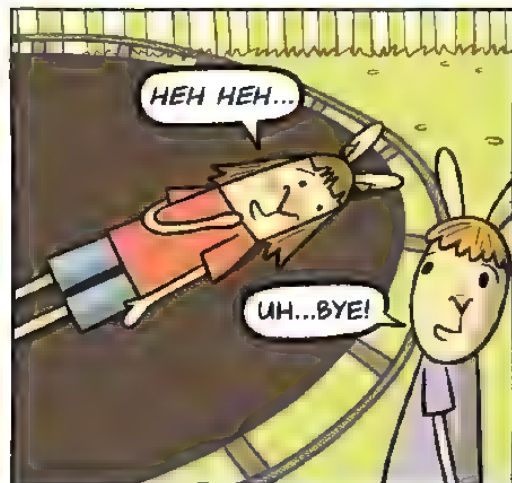
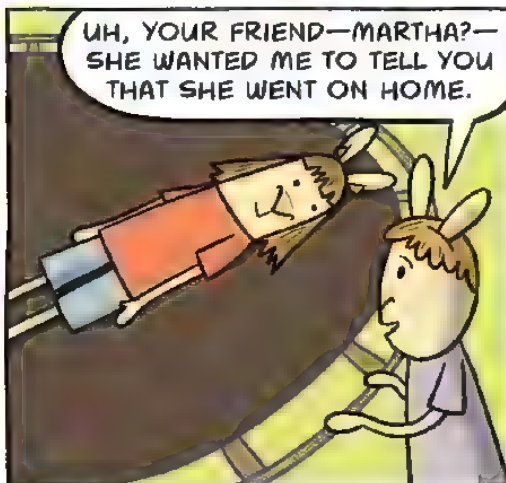
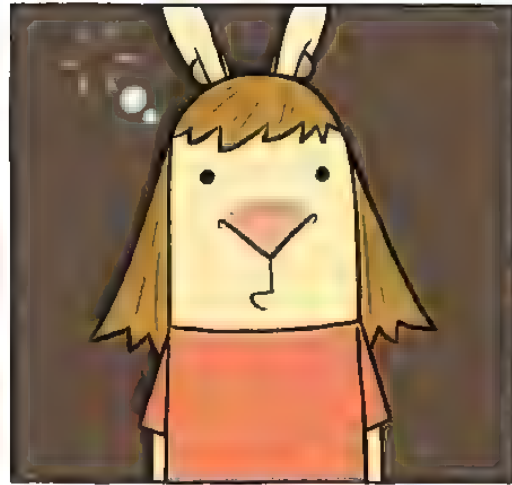
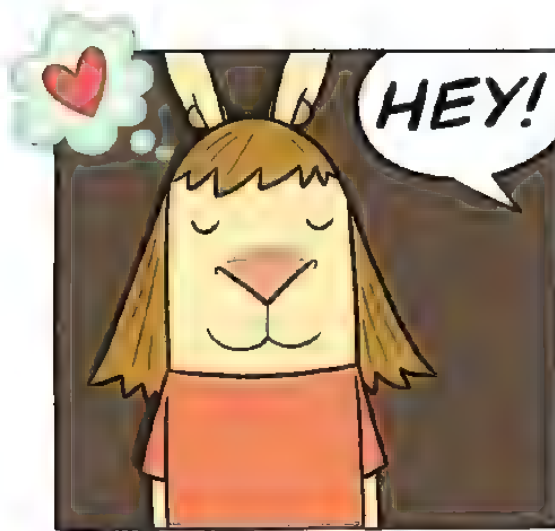
She spies a boy—but not just any boy.



It's Mike Miller, aka SUPERCRUSH!!!

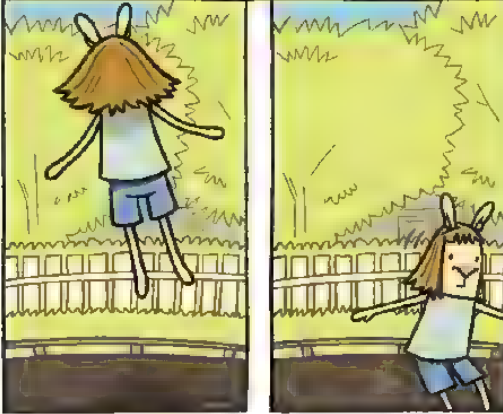




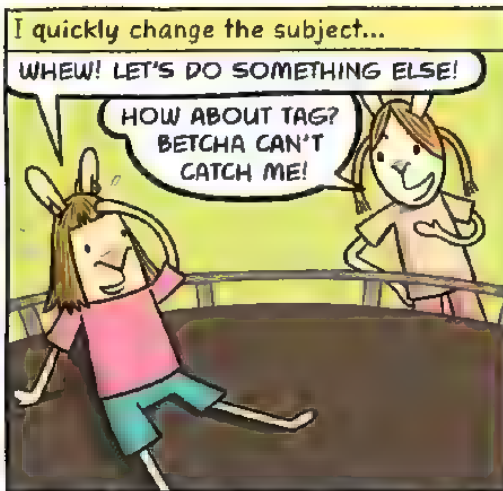
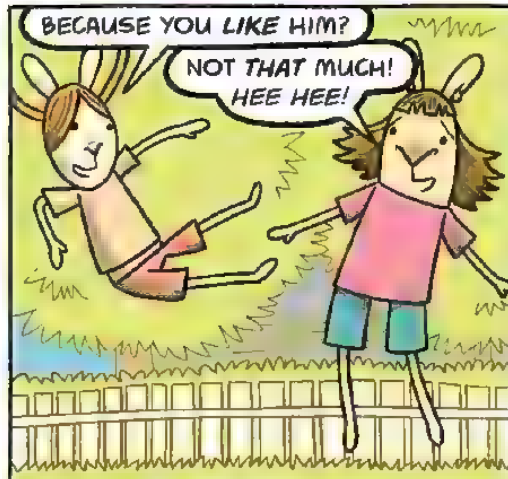
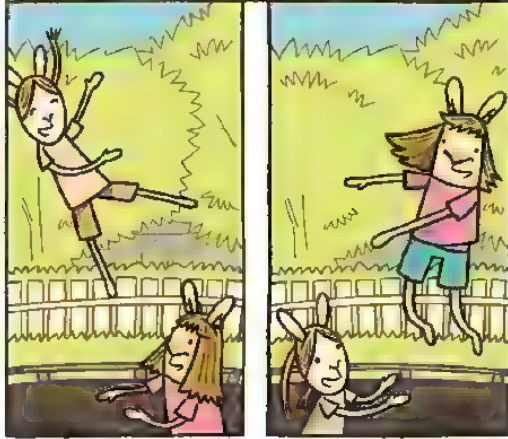


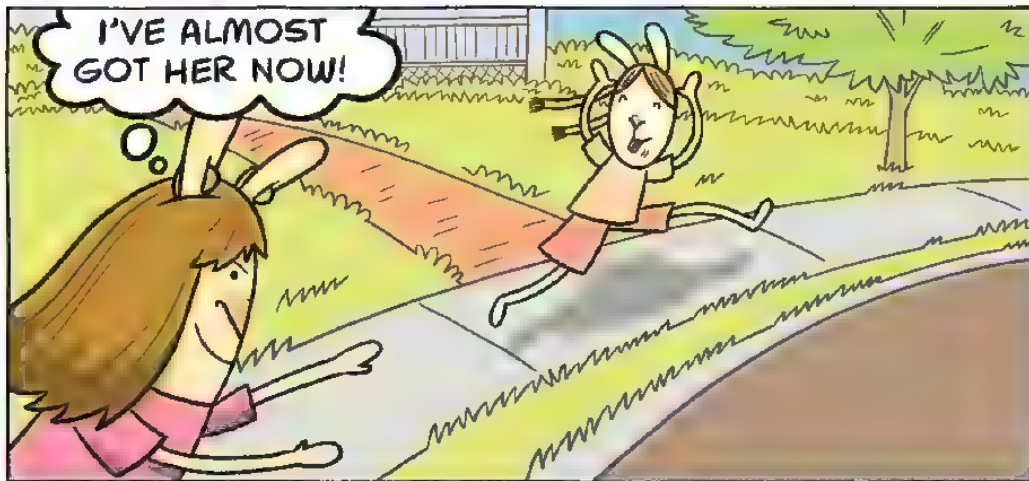
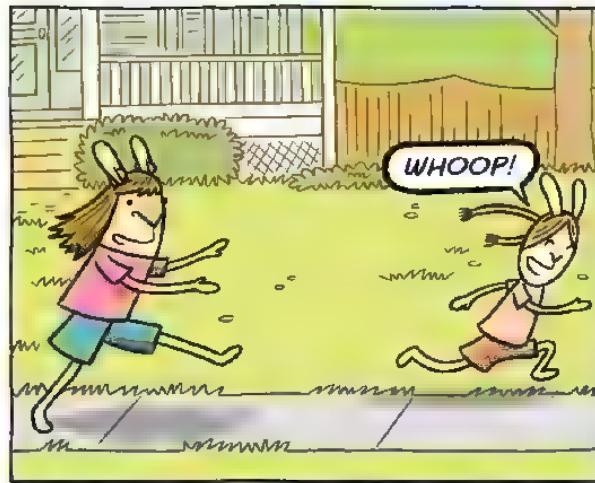
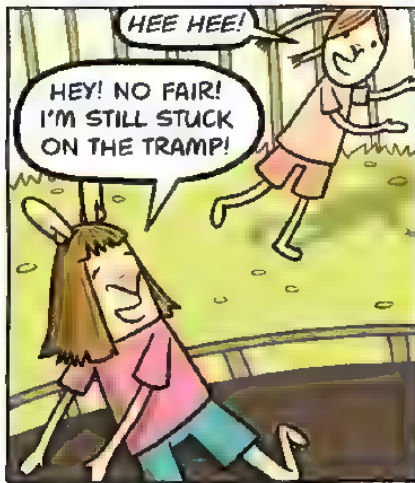


It is a very bouncy summer. Sometimes I jump on the trampoline by myself...



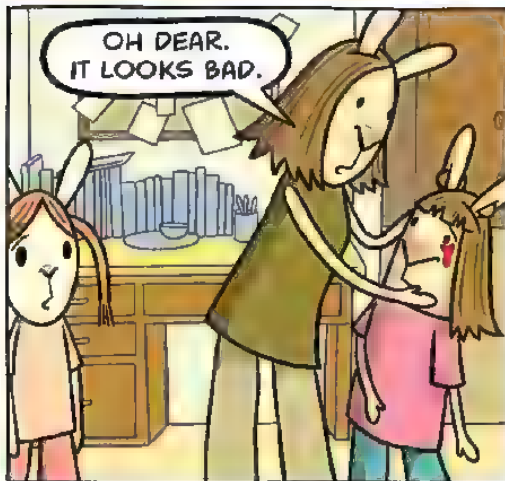
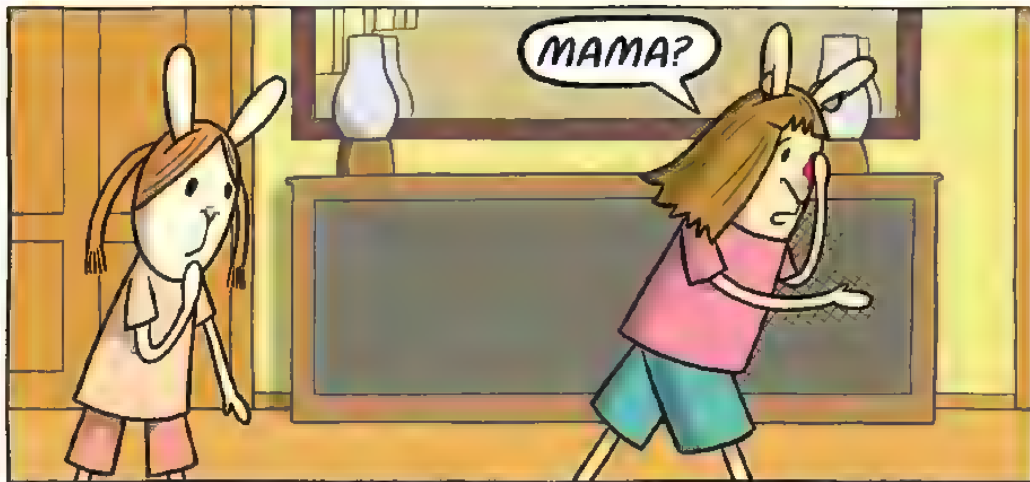
...but most of the time, I jump with Martha.

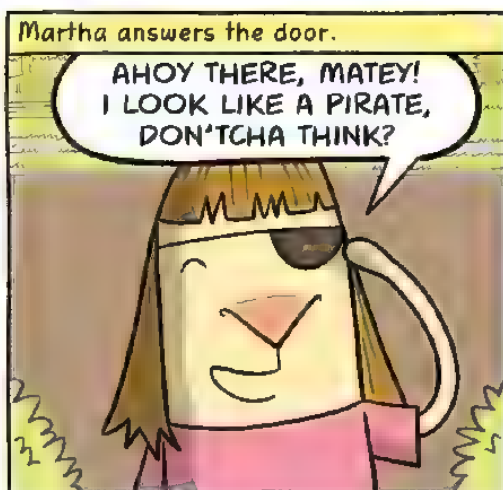
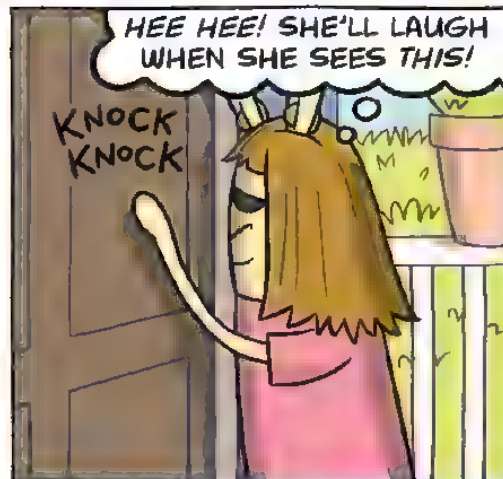
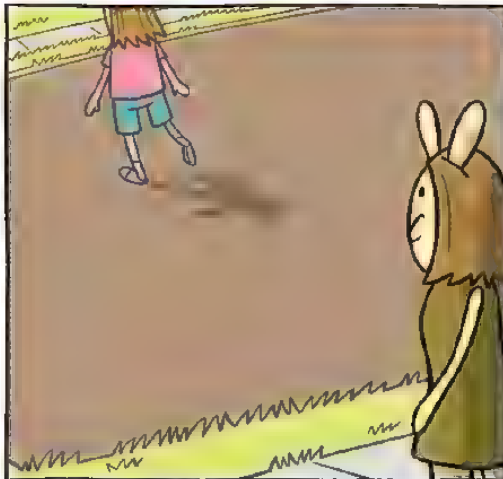
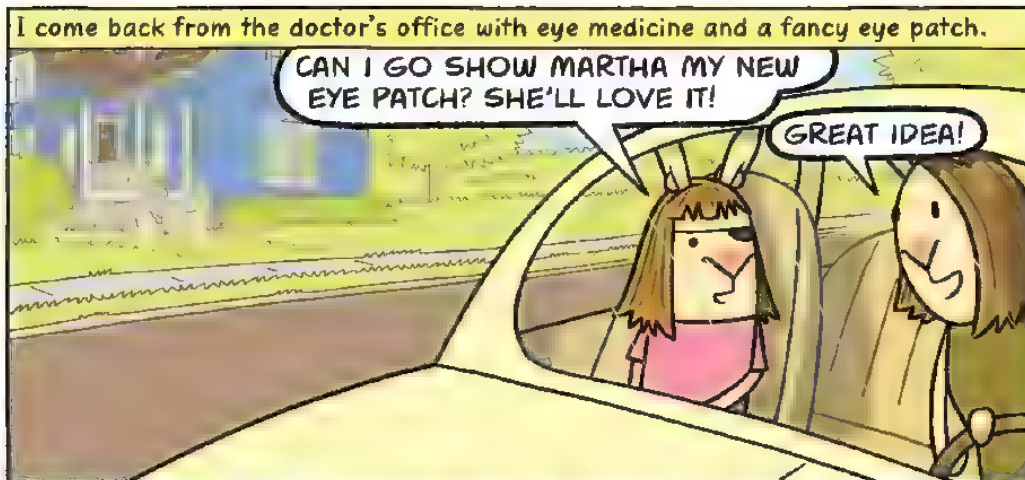


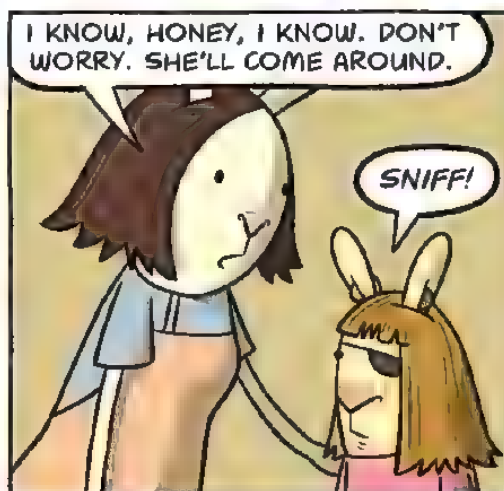
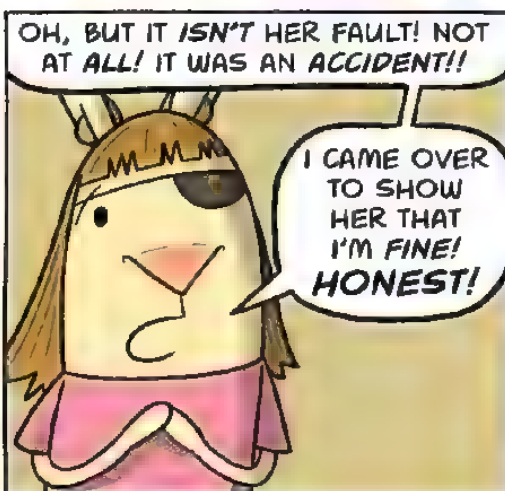
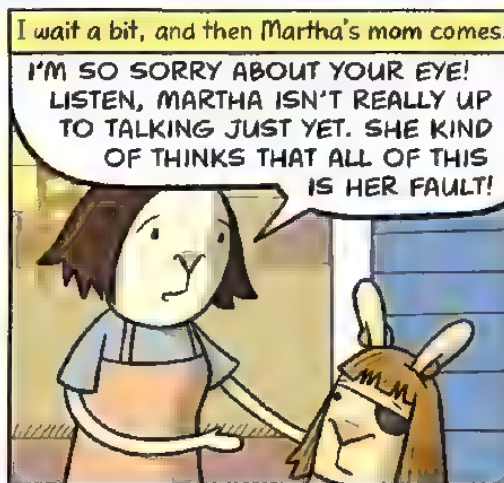
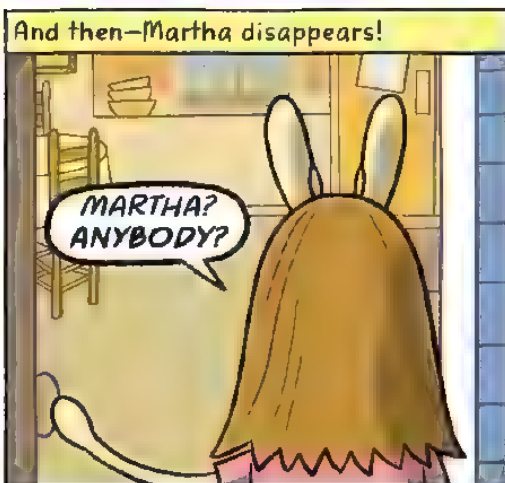
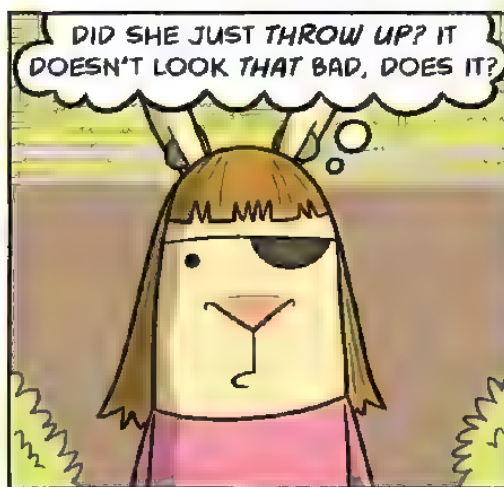






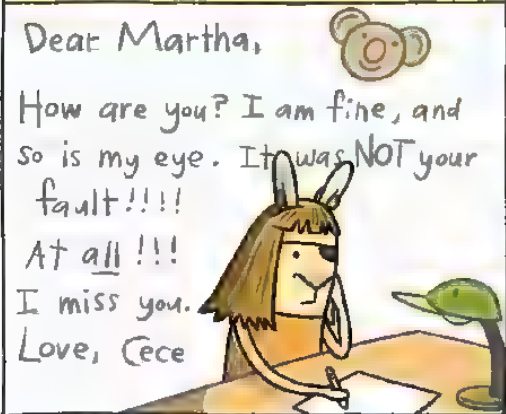




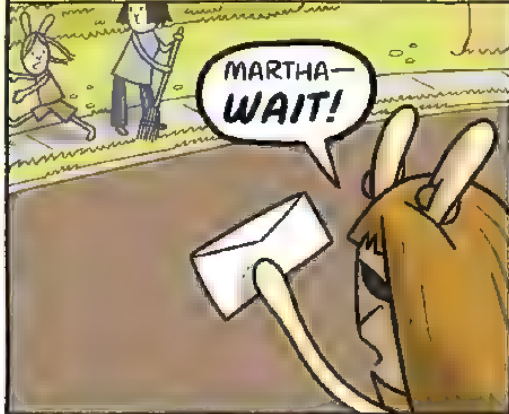




The next day, I write Martha a note. I put a koala bear sticker on it, too. She'll like that!



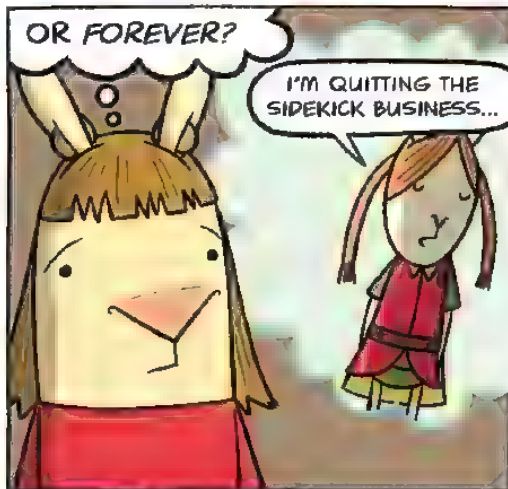
I run across the street to give her the note. I don't even wait for Mom to watch me.



MY EYE'S ALL BETTER! SURELY  
WHEN SHE SEES THAT, SHE'LL  
BE MY FRIEND AGAIN!



COCK COCK

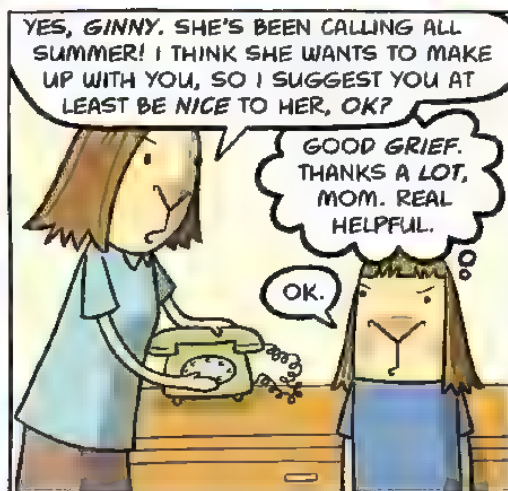
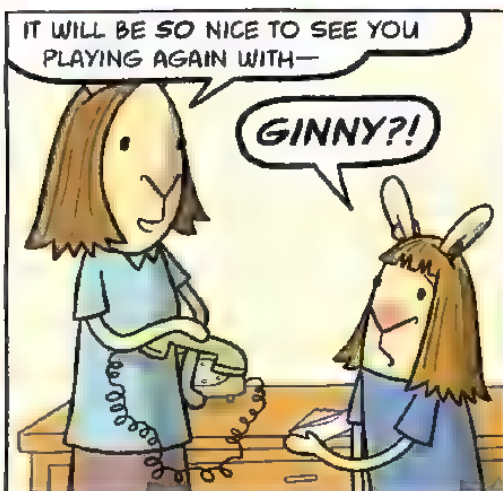
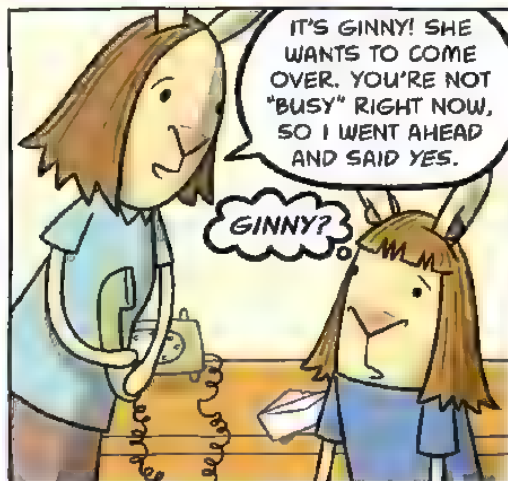
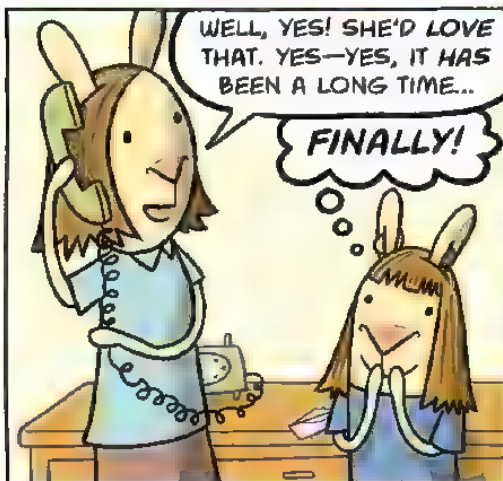


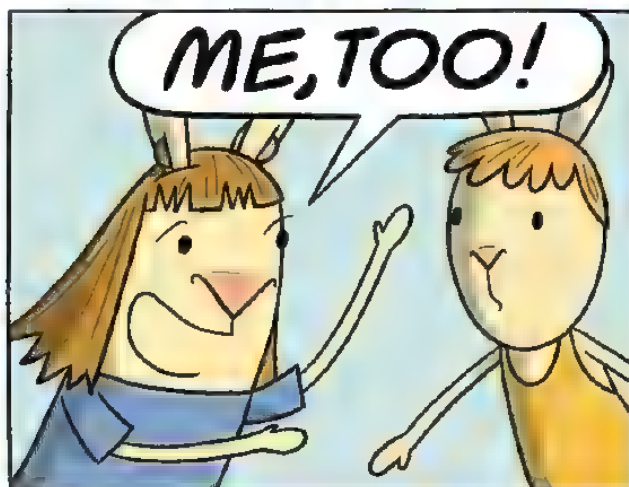
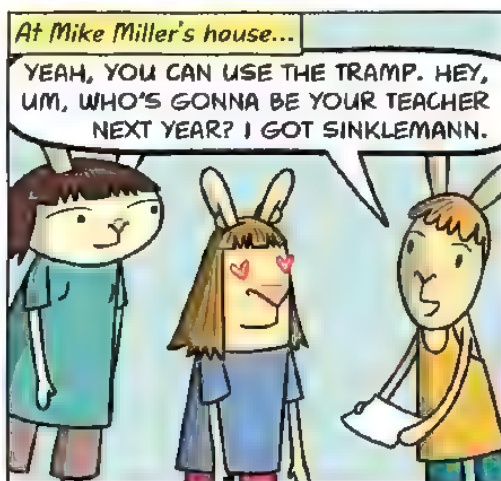
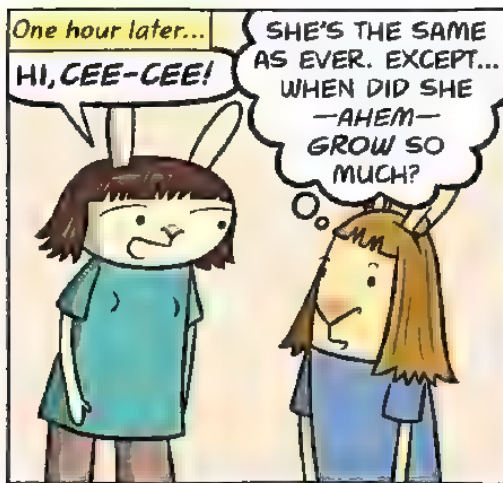


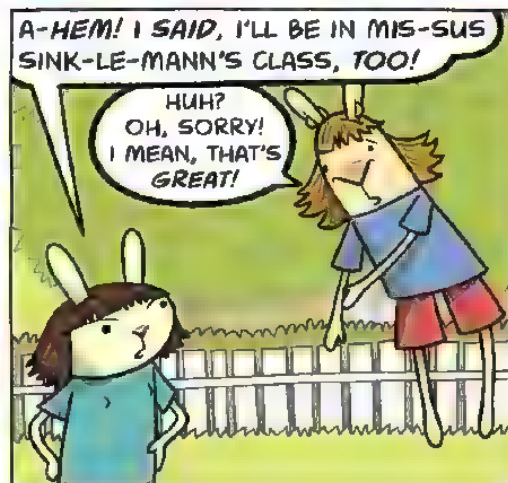
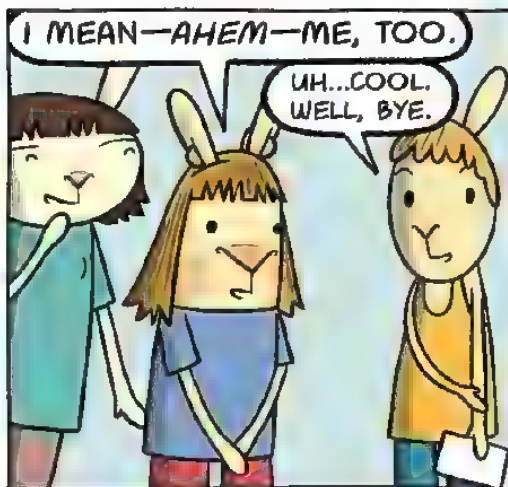


# thirteen

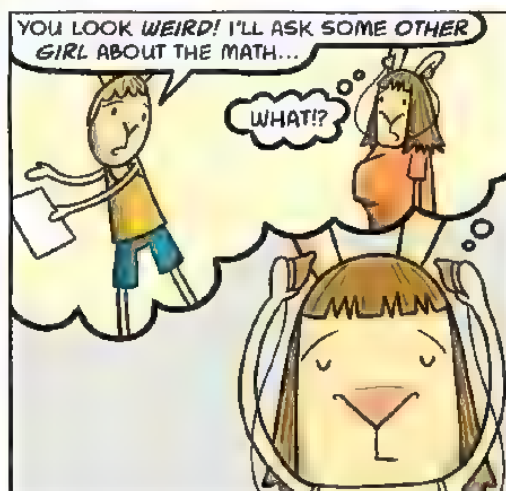
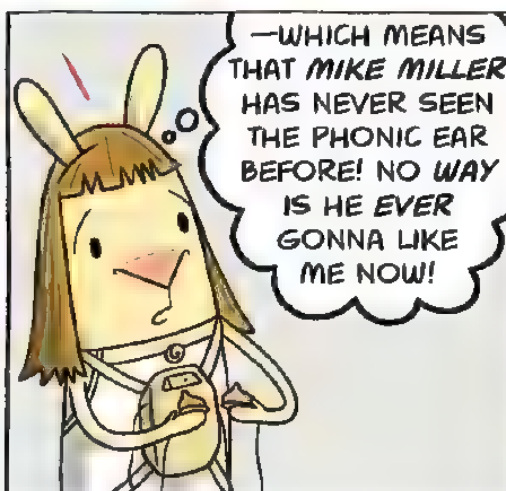
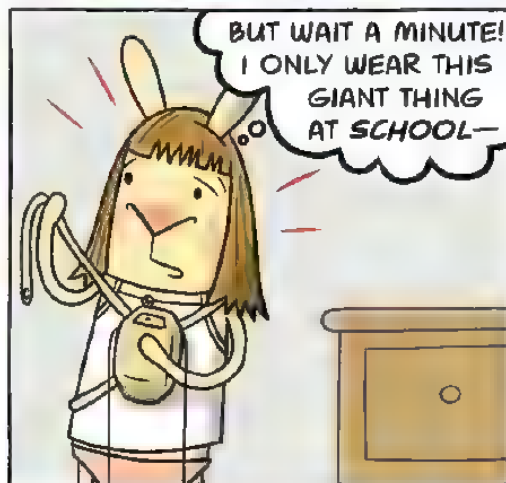
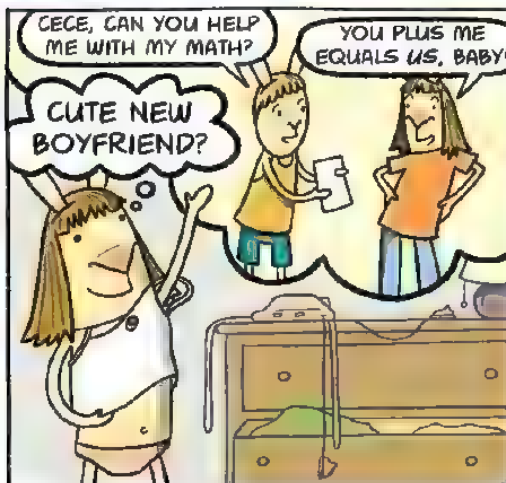
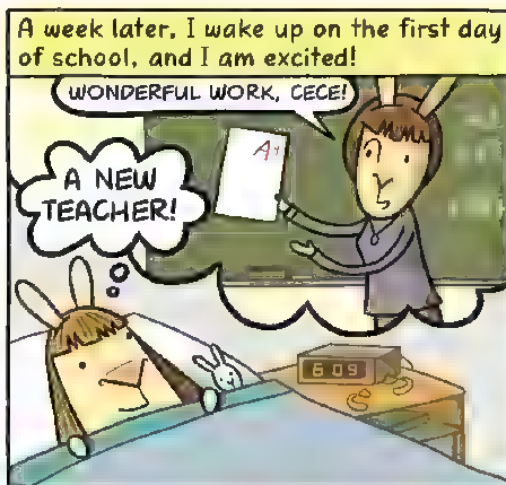
Weeks pass. In late August I get a letter that says who my fifth-grade teacher's gonna be.



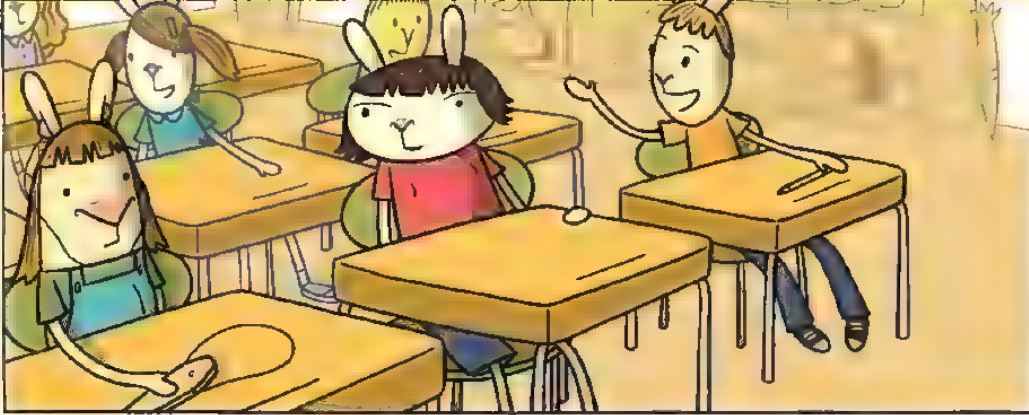




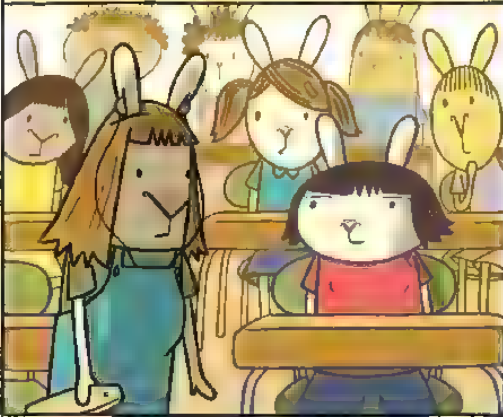




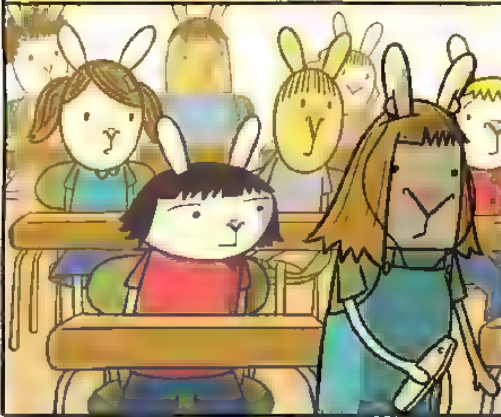
The first day back at school is always difficult: I have to walk past everyone's desk to give my new teacher the microphone.



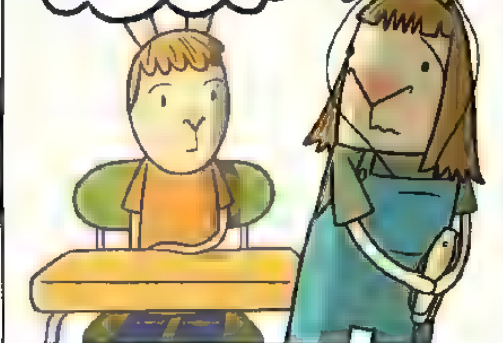
If there's one thing I hate, it's showing the microphone to a teacher for the first time...



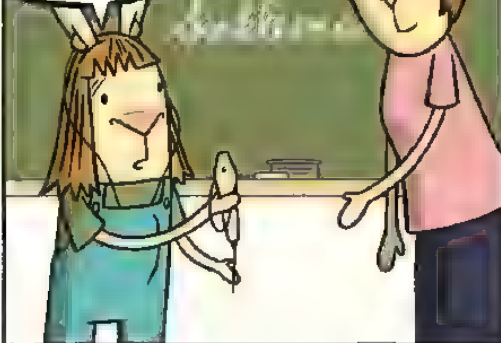
...mostly because everyone stares at me as I go up to the teacher's desk.



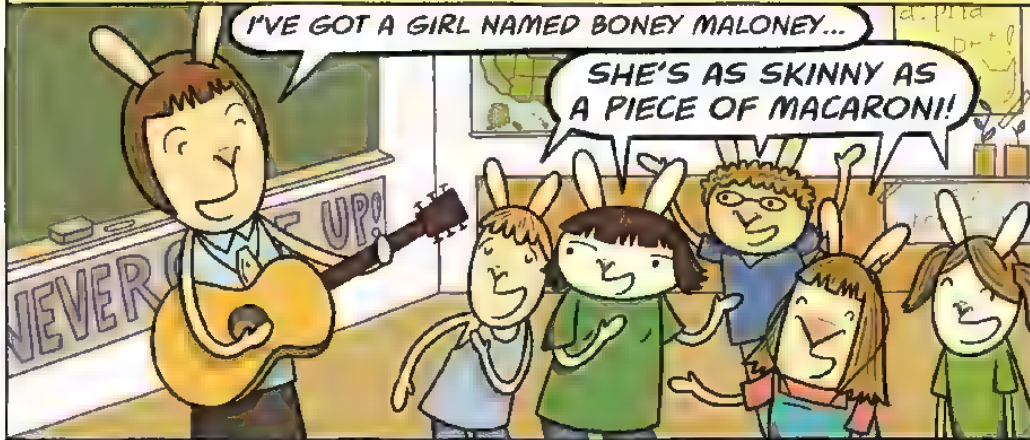
And today, Mike Miller is staring at me, too!  
I WISH HE COULDN'T SEE MY CORDS!  
HE MUST THINK I'M A TOTAL WEIRDO!



MRS. SINKLEMAN, THIS IS THE MICROPHONE.  
AND HERE'S WHAT YOU DO...



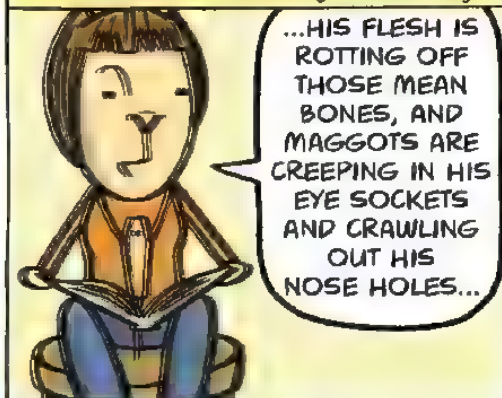
Actually, it's totally worth giving Mrs. Sinklemann the microphone each day. Otherwise, I would miss out on all the fun. She's an awesome teacher...



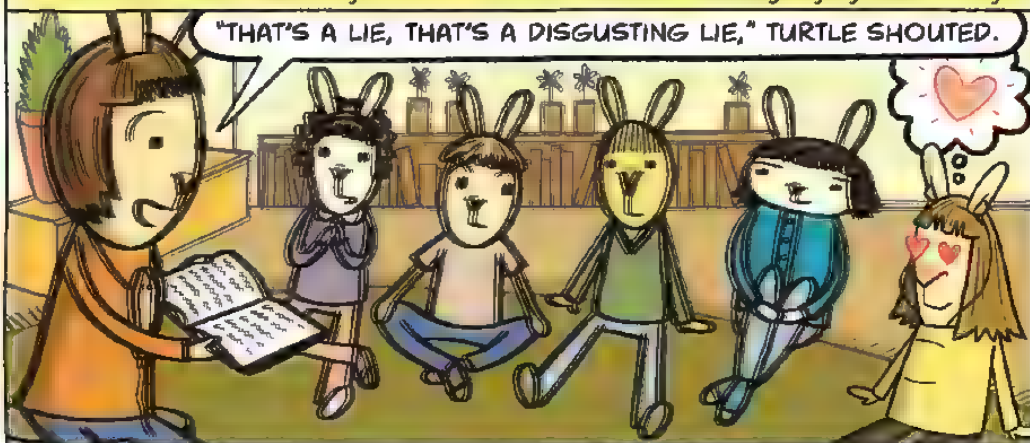
...and her classroom is the place to be.



But one day during storytime, I realize that Mrs. Sinklemann is looking kinda fuzzy.

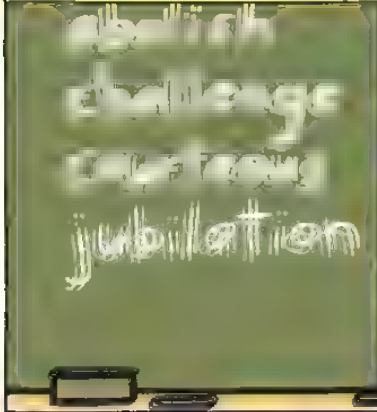


And the kids look kinda fuzzy, too. Could it be love that's making my eyes all blurry?





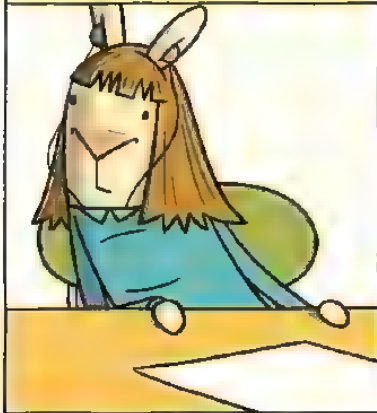
The blurriness gets worse. And now I have a serious problem!



We're taking a vocabulary test today, and I can't read the words that we're supposed to define!



I want to ask Mrs. Sinklemann for help, but where is she?

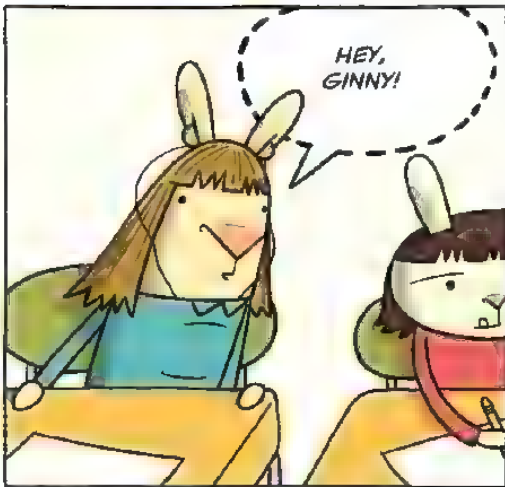
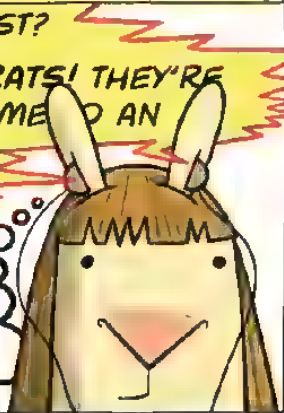


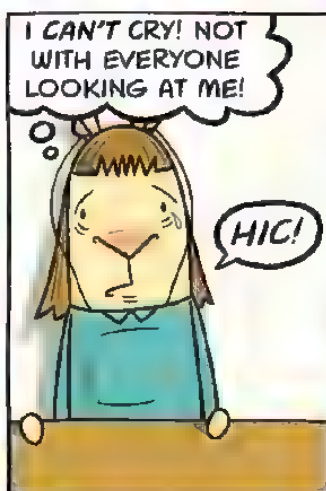
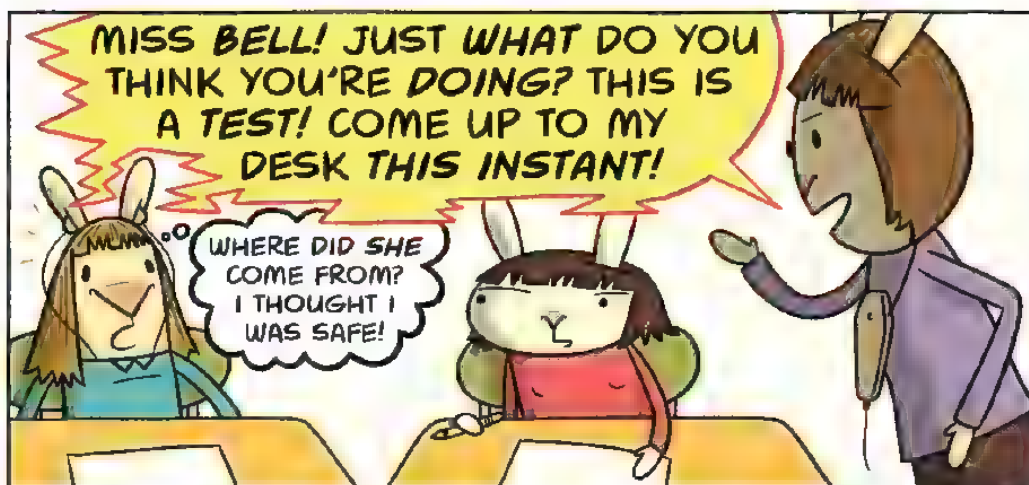
Oh!—I can hear her! And it sounds like she's talking to another teacher:

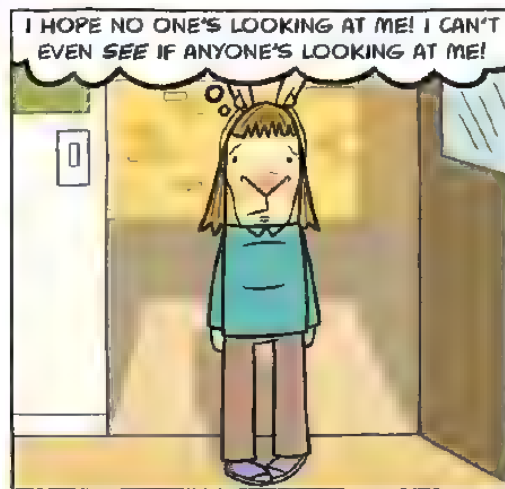
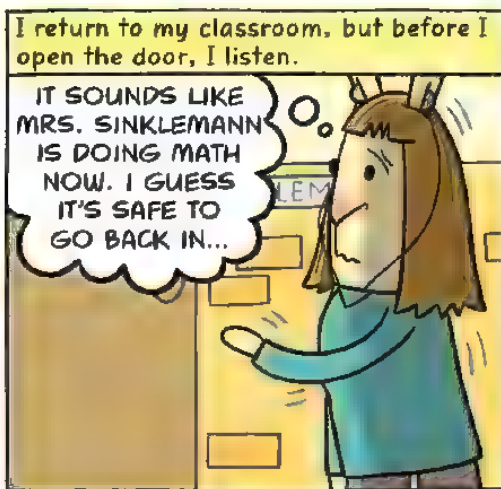
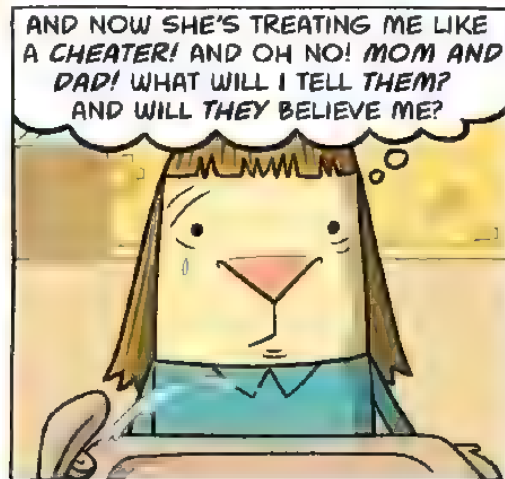
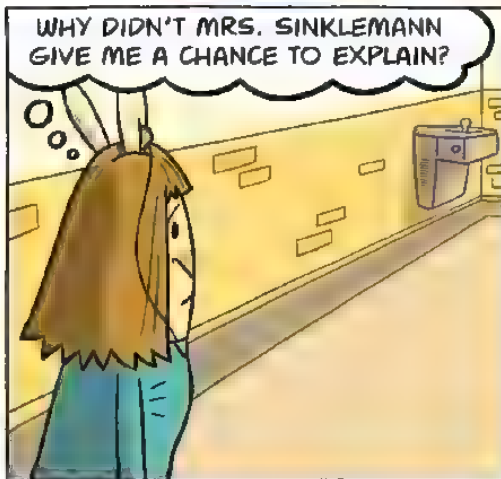
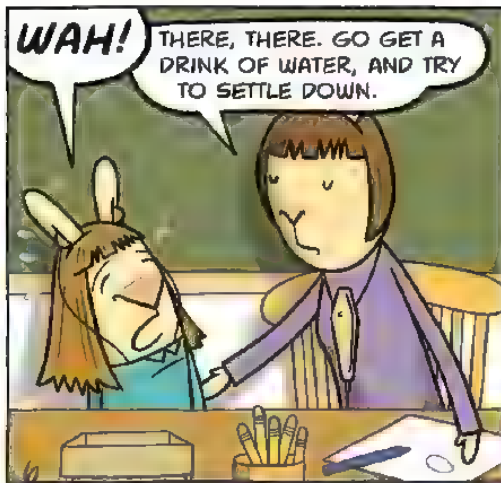
**BAD DAY, MRS. WEST?**

**OH, THOSE BRATS! THEY'RE GONNA SEND ME TO AN EARLY GRAVE!**

HMMM. THAT MEANS SHE'S NOT EVEN IN THE ROOM! I BET SHE'S IN THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE!

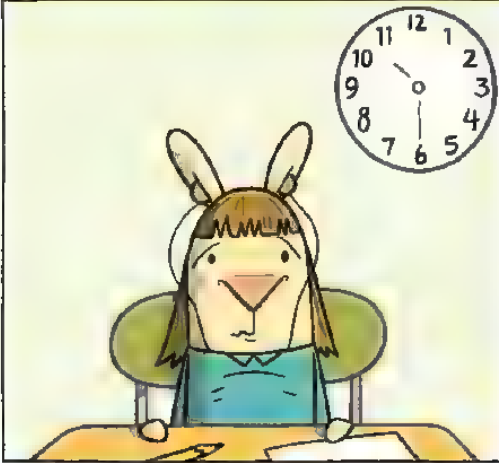




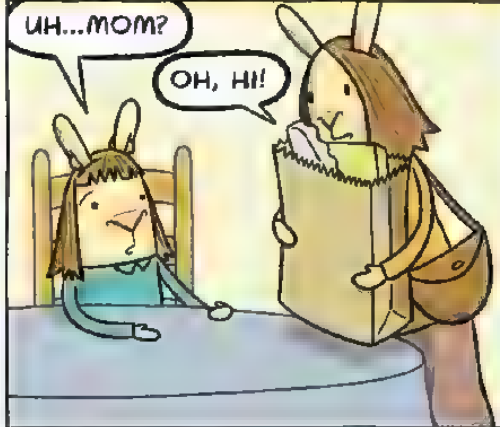




Somehow, I make it back to my desk. It's a long, long day after that.

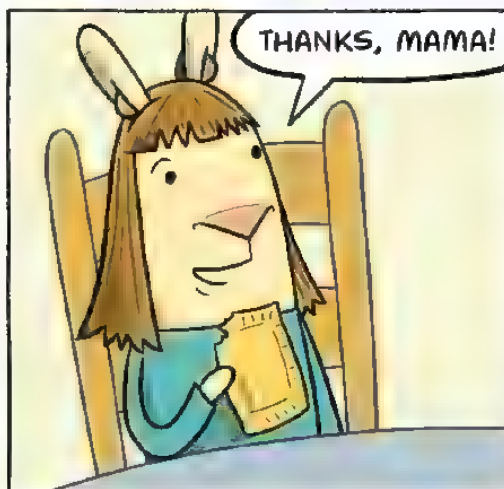
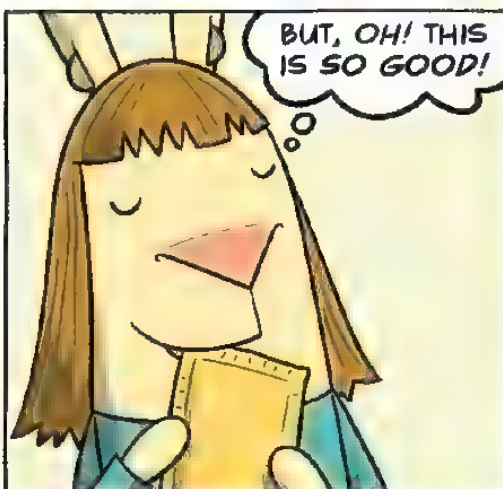
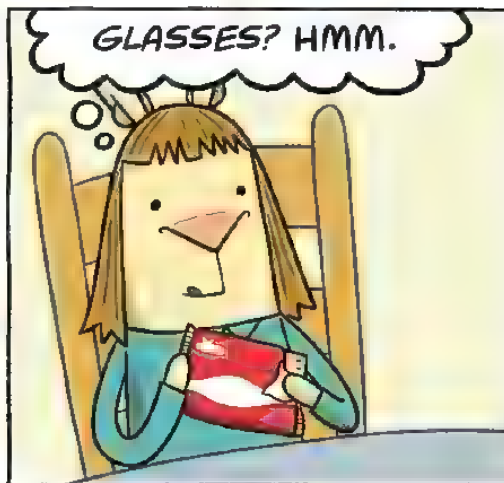
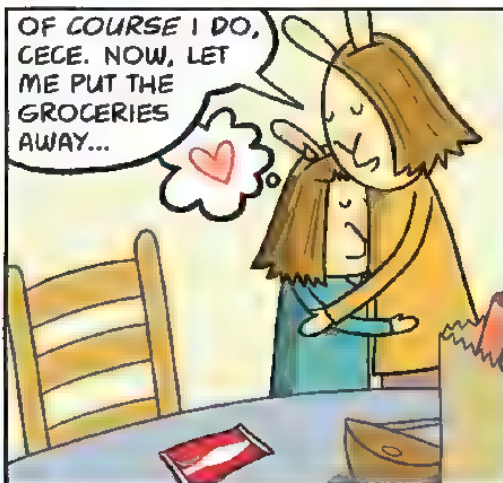


I get home before Mom does. And when she arrives, I am ready...



UM, I SAW MRS. SINKLEMANN JUST TEN MINUTES AGO AT THE GREEN MARKET. SHE TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED. I KNEW YOU'D BE UPSET, SO I BOUGHT YOU SOMETHING...



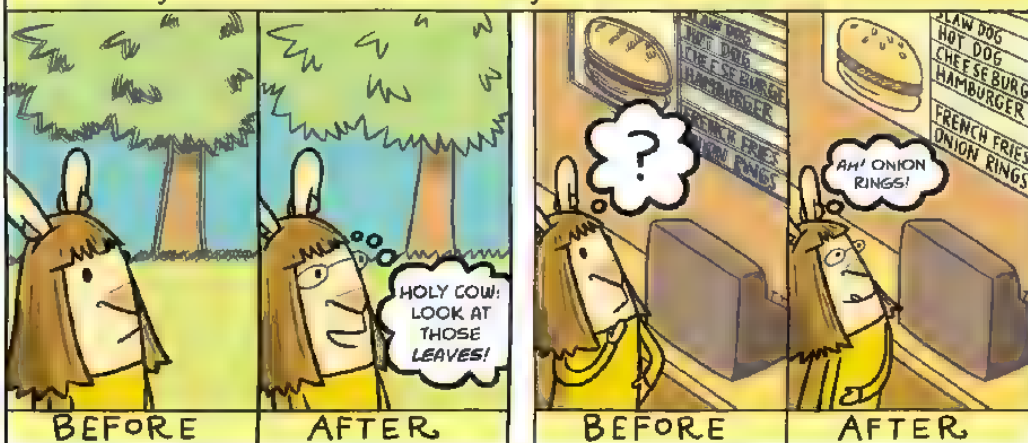




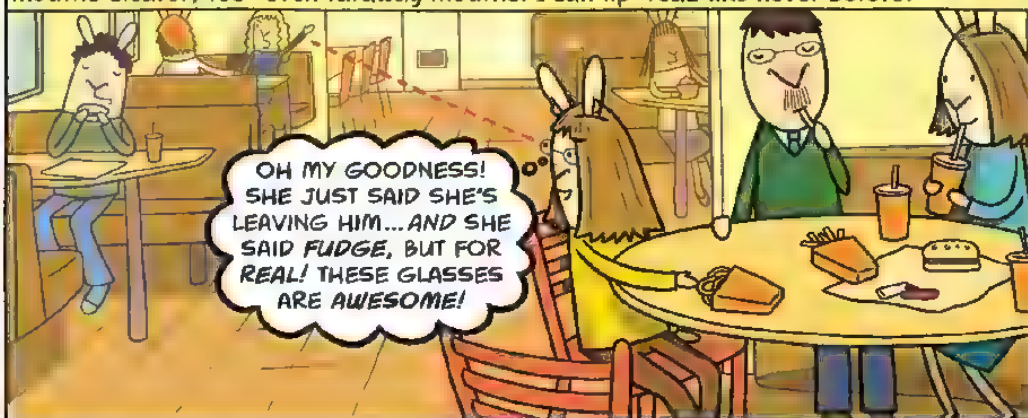
Sure enough, Mom is right. On Saturday, I get glasses—and they are incredible.



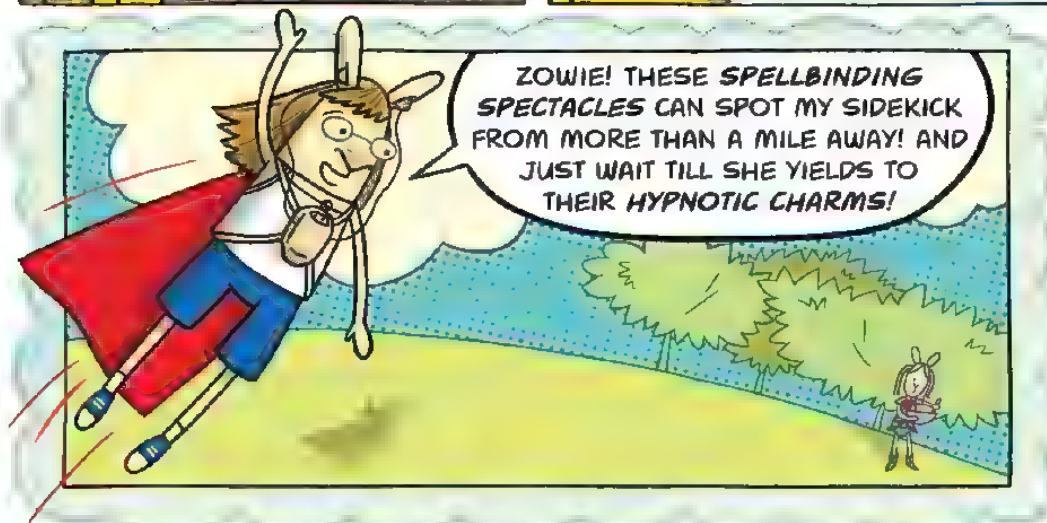
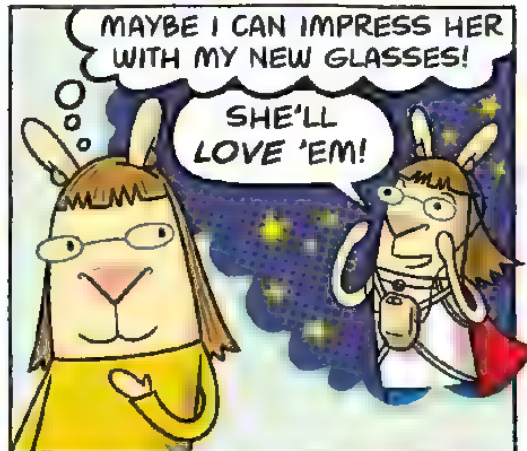
The faraway stuff that had been so blurry? It's all so much clearer now!

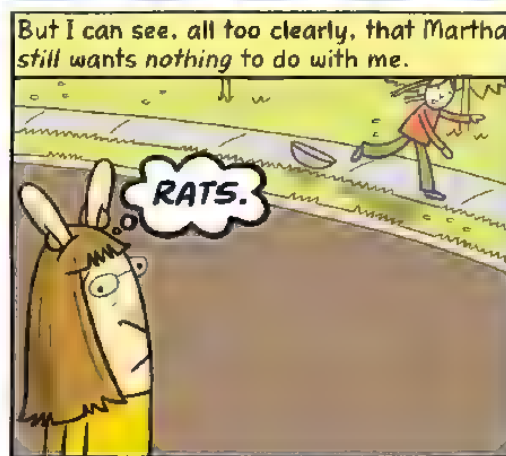
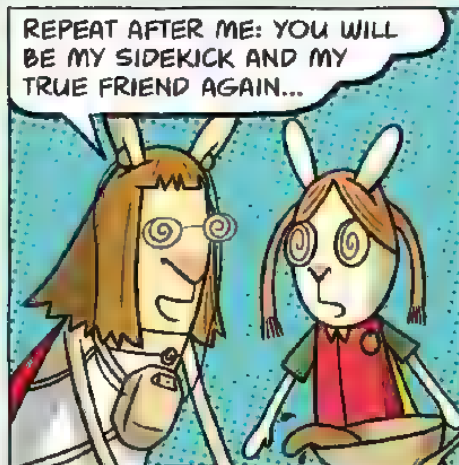


We eat out that day, and at the restaurant I discover that my glasses make everyone's mouths clearer, too—even faraway mouths. I can lip-read like never before.

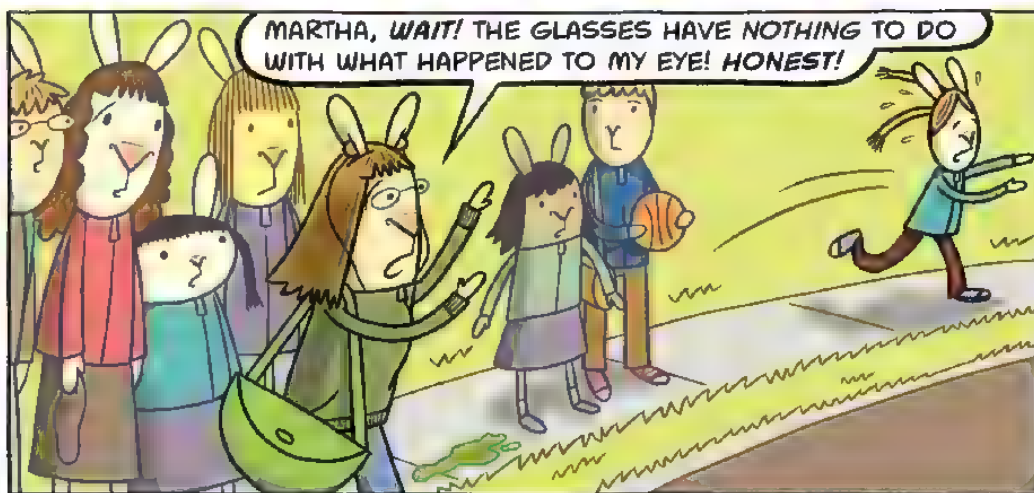
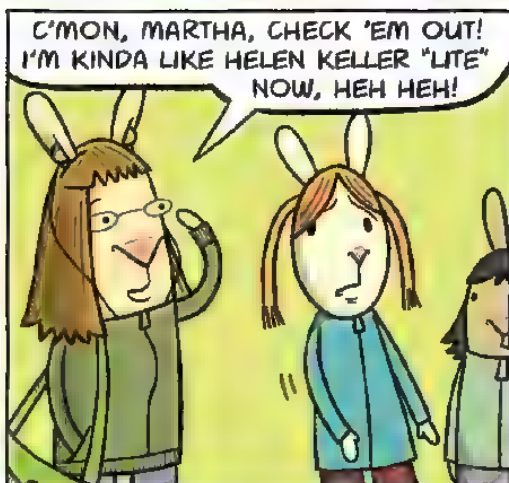
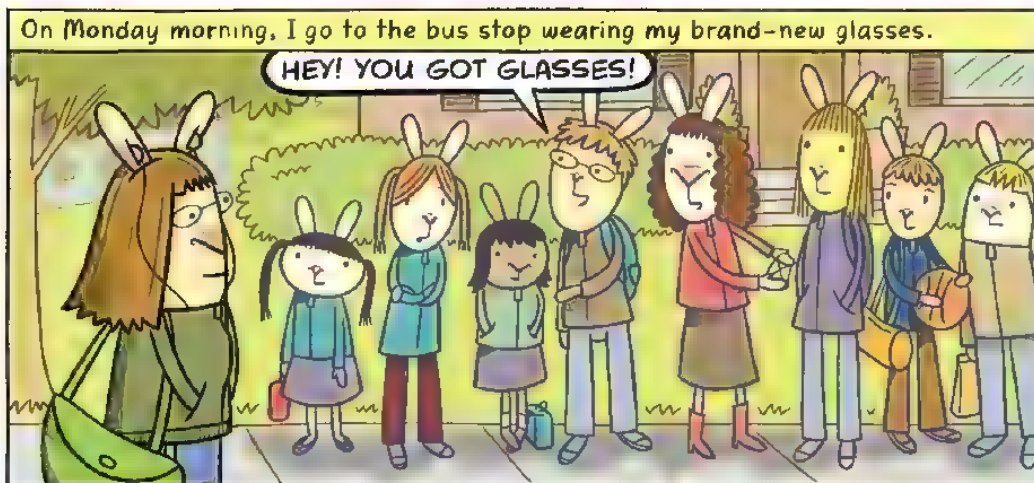


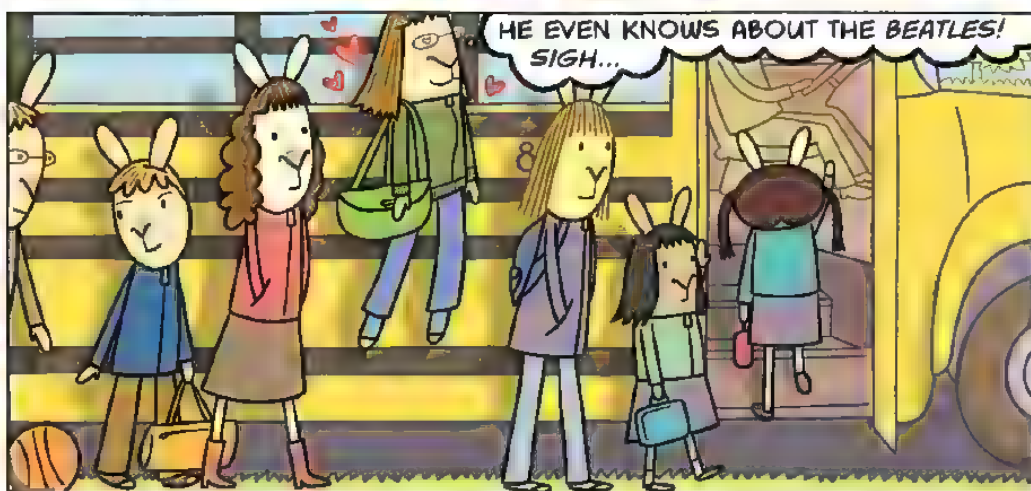
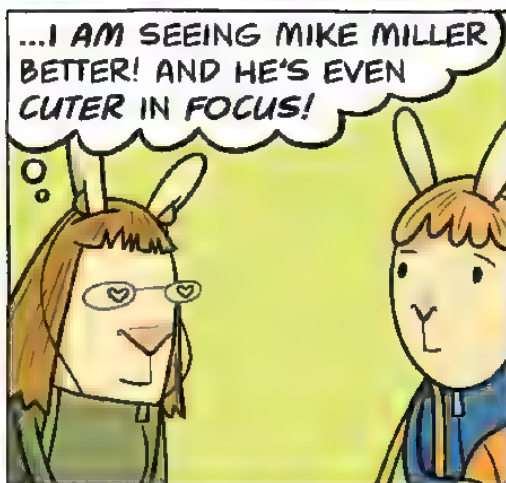
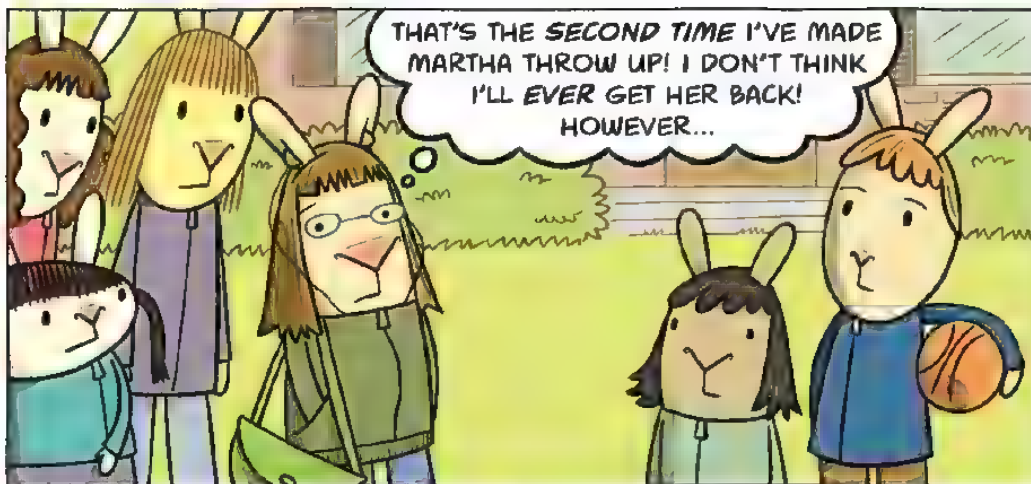
After lunch, I experiment with my glasses. Off and on, off and on, over and over.



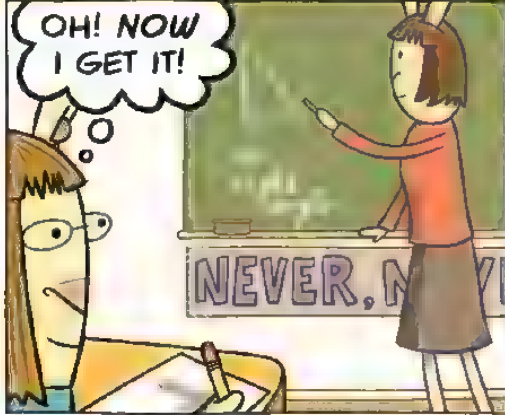




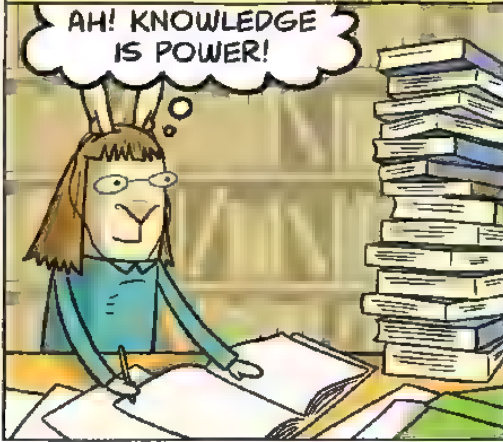




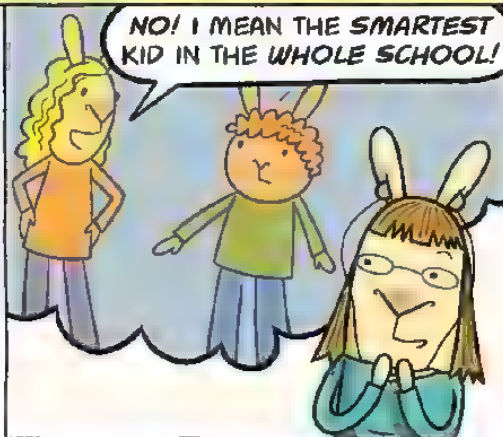
I love my glasses. Being able to see makes everything easier—especially at school.



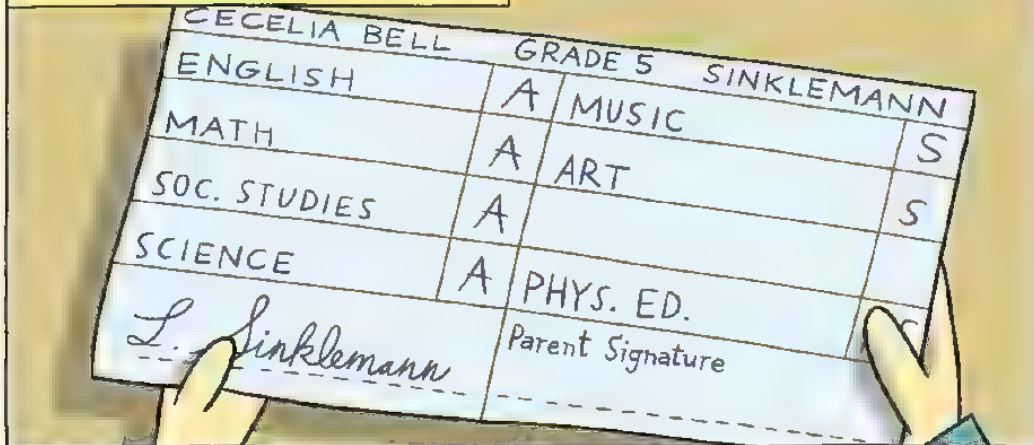
So I decide to really, really study.



Maybe if I make good grades, here's what will happen:

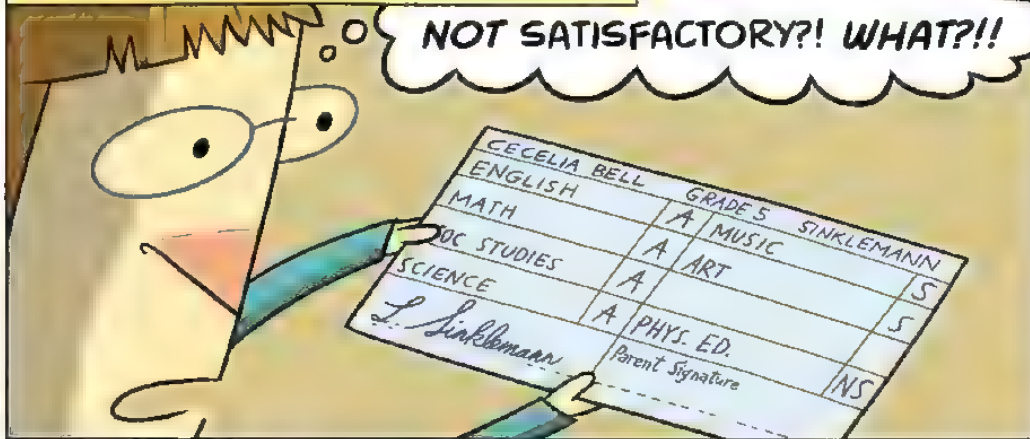


My hard work pays off in all my classes...

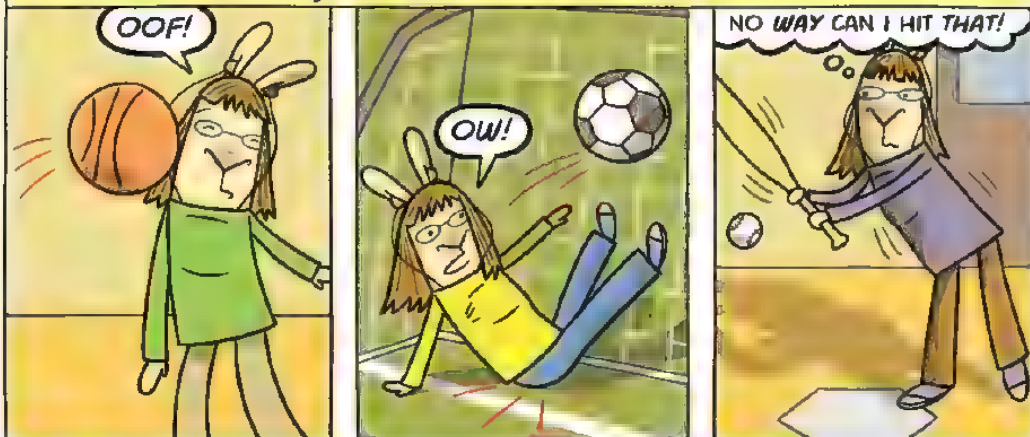




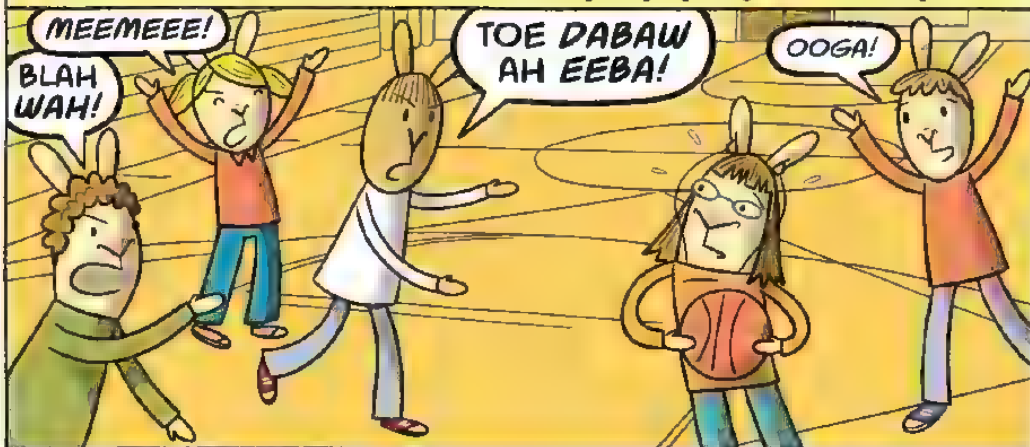
...except one: Physical Education, also known as P.E.



Well, I know I'm not very athletic...



...and it's so hard to know what to do when everybody's yelling different things at me.



The P.E. teacher, Mr. Potts, doesn't help my situation at all. In fact, I live in fear of him!



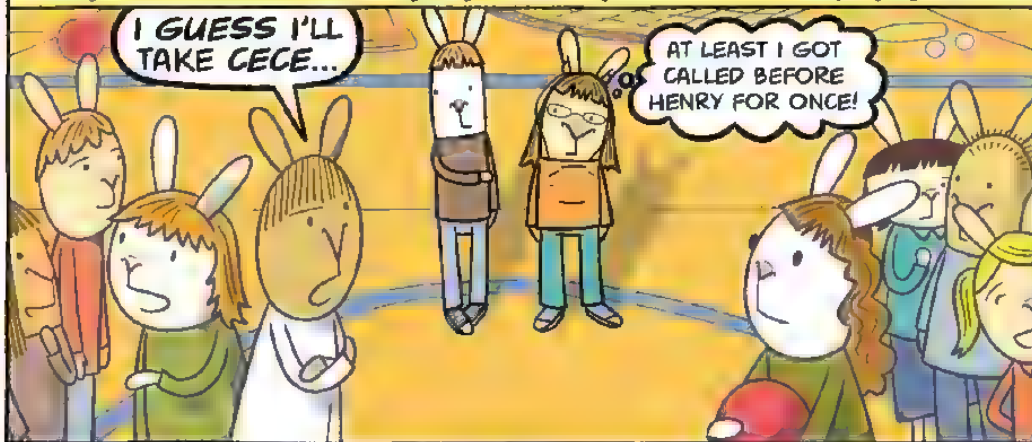
And he really does treat us as if we are two separate teams: the athletic kids...



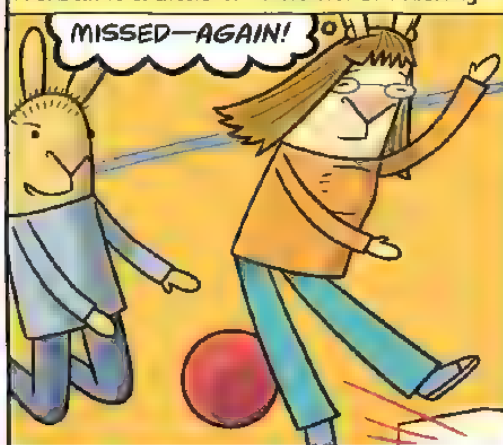
...and everyone else.



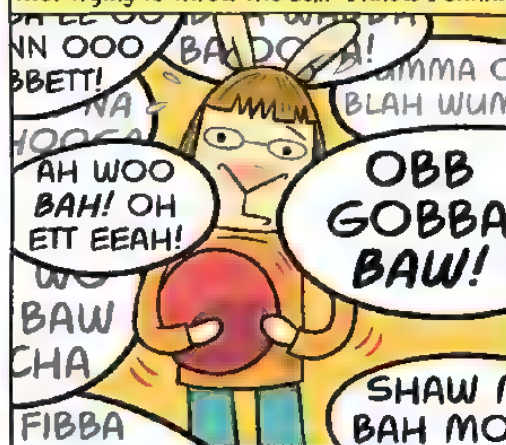
Luckily, we don't have P.E. every day. But today we do—and we're playing kickball.



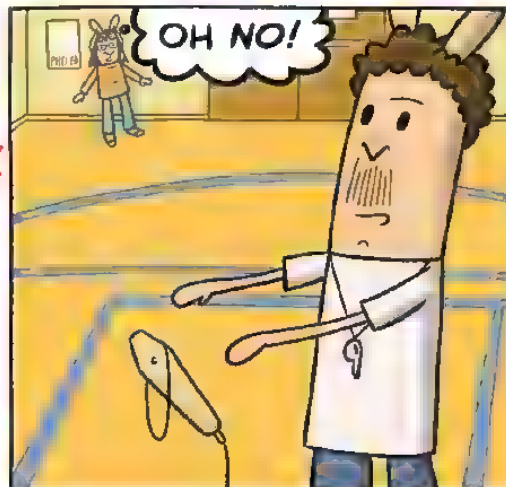
Kickball is a disaster. Whether I'm kicking...



...or trying to throw the ball—I know I stink.

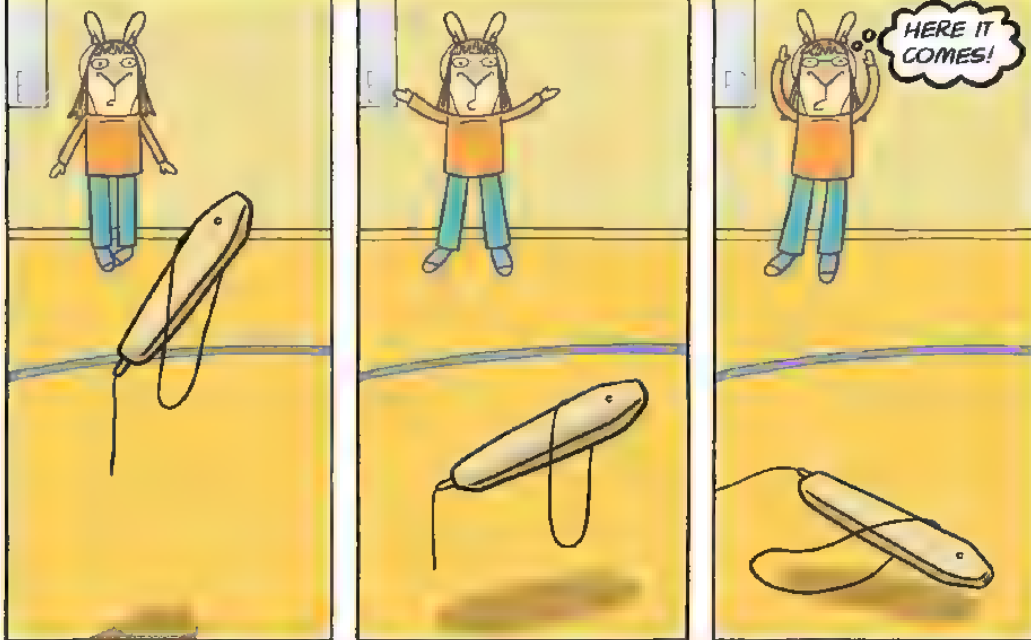


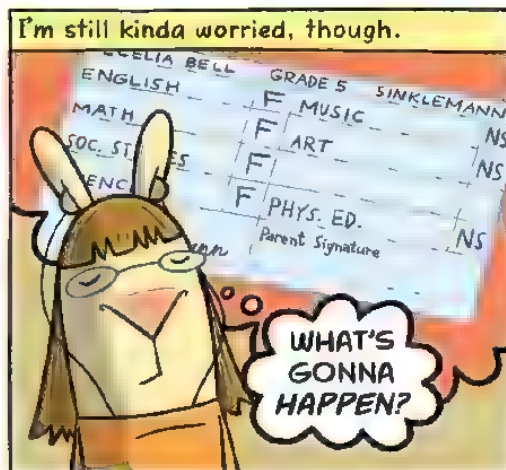
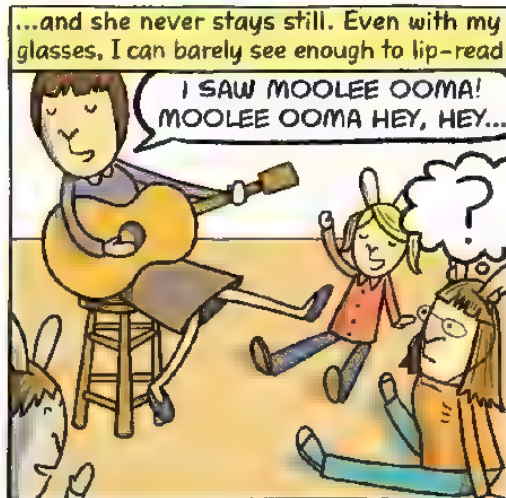
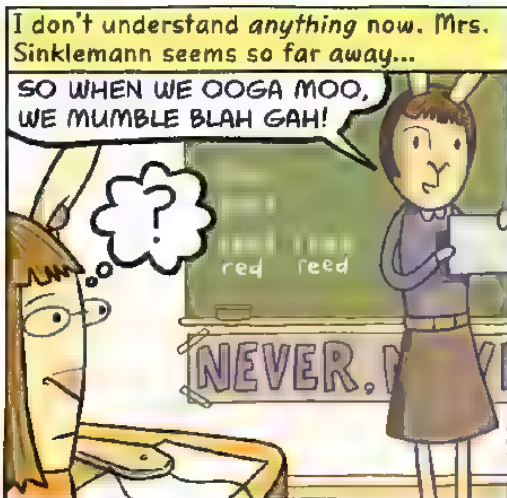
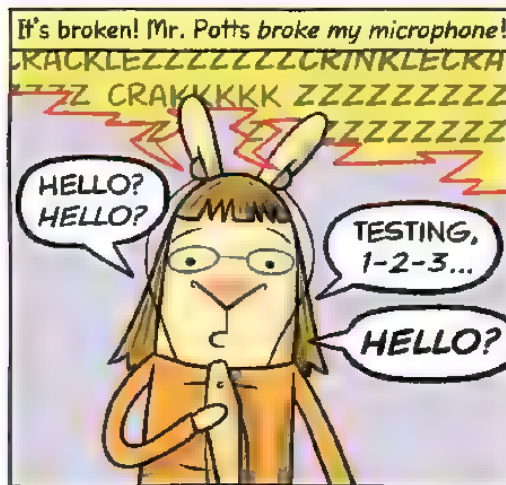
I sneak in a little break during the game, and suddenly, I hear Mr. Potts talking to himself.





I watch as the microphone falls toward the Hardest Surface in the Known Universe—the gym floor!





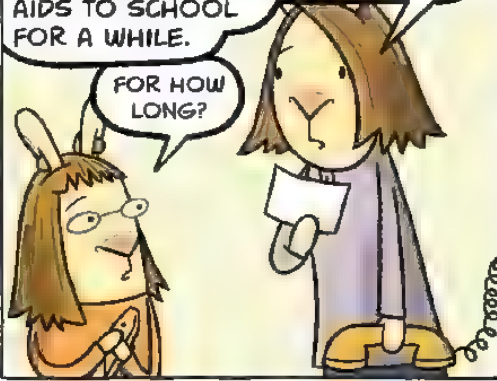
When I get home, I put on my behind-the-ear aids, and I show Mom the broken microphone. She calls my audiologist.

...UH-HUH, I SEE. SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND? OK, LET ME GET A PENCIL...



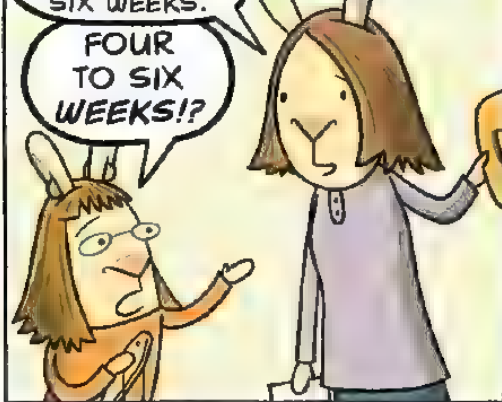
WE'RE SENDING THE MICROPHONE AND YOUR HEARING AID TO MARYLAND. I GUESS YOU'LL HAVE TO WEAR YOUR BEHIND-THE-EAR AIDS TO SCHOOL FOR A WHILE.

FOR HOW LONG?



UM...EVERYTHING WILL COME BACK TO US IN THE MAIL IN FOUR TO SIX WEEKS.

FOUR TO SIX WEEKS!?

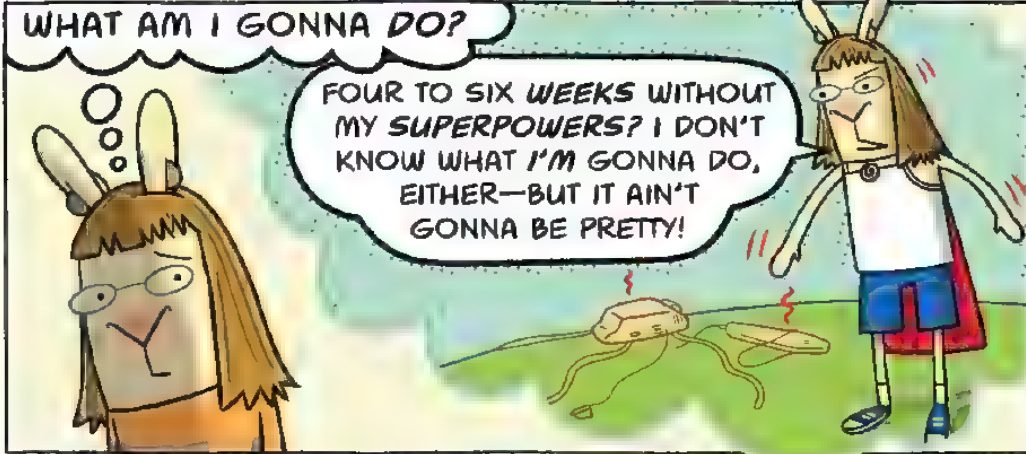


I WON'T BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND ANYTHING! I'LL FAIL EVERYTHING!



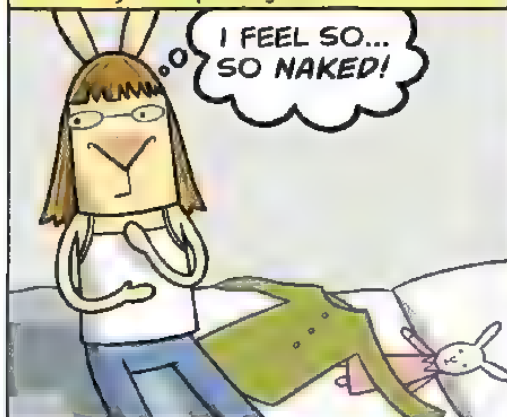
WHAT AM I GONNA DO?

FOUR TO SIX WEEKS WITHOUT MY SUPERPOWERS? I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GONNA DO, EITHER—BUT IT AIN'T GONNA BE PRETTY!





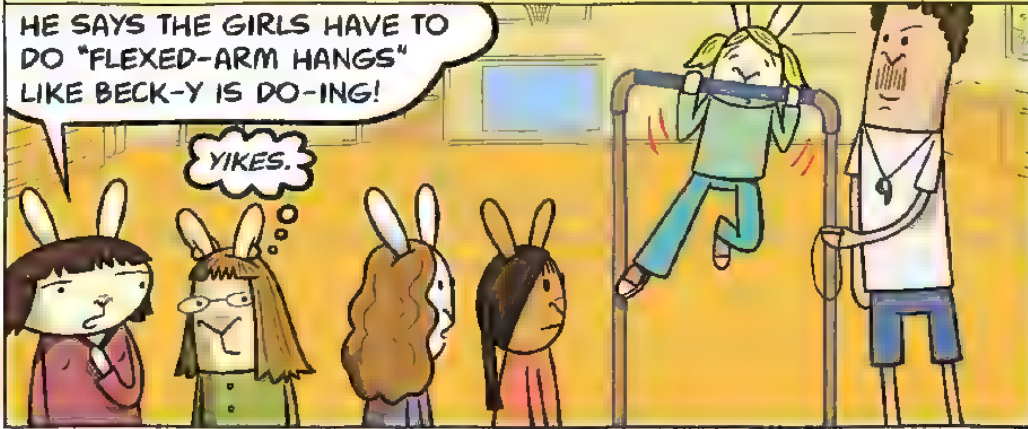
The next morning, for the first time ever, I actually miss putting on the Phonic Ear.



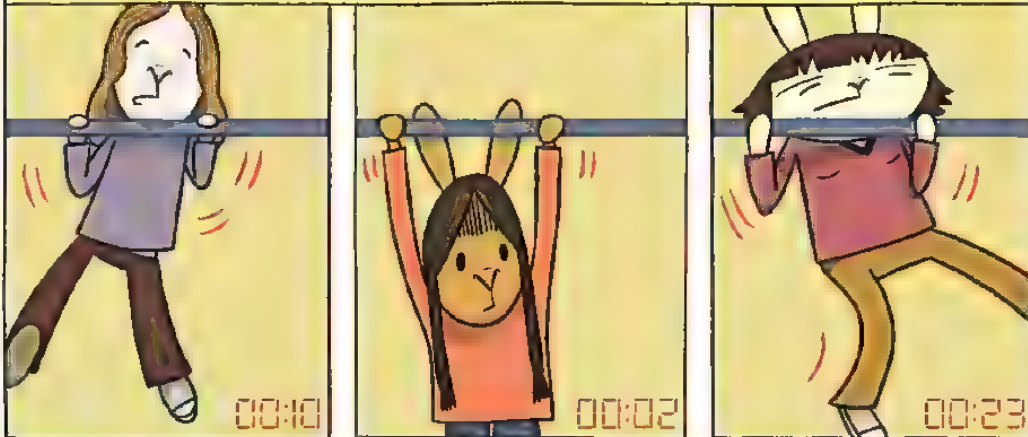
Today in P.E., we are supposed to do tests for the Presidential Physical Fitness Award.

HE SAYS THE GIRLS HAVE TO DO "FLEXED-ARM HANGS" LIKE BECK-Y IS DO-ING!

YIKES.



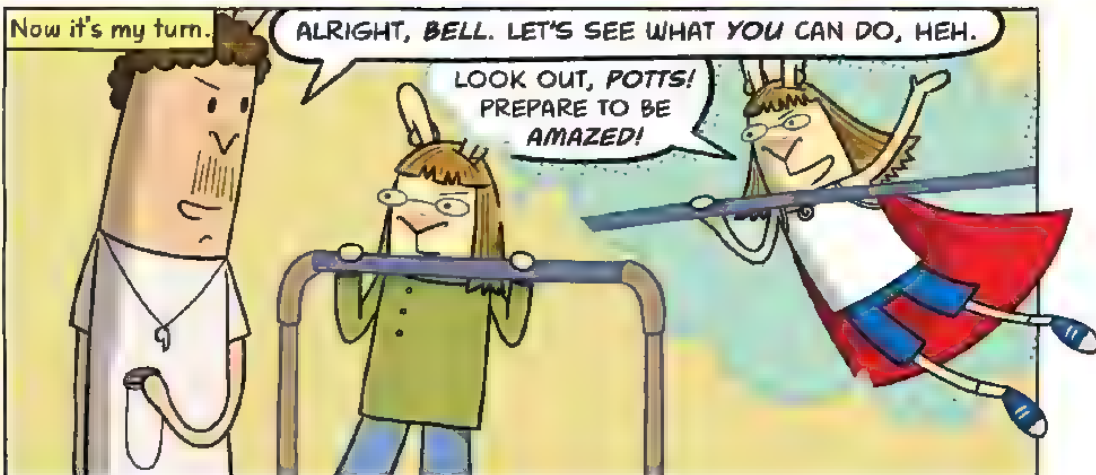
A flexed-arm hang means you have to stay in a pull-up position and keep your chin over the bar for as long as you can stand it!



Now it's my turn.

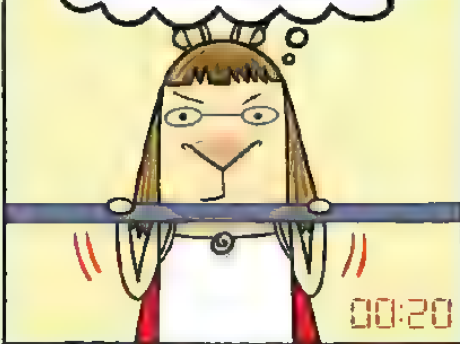
ALRIGHT, BELL. LET'S SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO, HEH.

LOOK OUT, POTTS!  
PREPARE TO BE  
AMAZED!



Our hero is suddenly fueled by rage!

THAT MAN HAS COST ME  
MY SUPERPOWERS...



...MY GOOD GRADES...



...BUT NOT MY GOOD NAME!



SIXTY-FOUR  
SECONDS!  
I AM  
EL DEAFO!  
I AM A  
CHAMPION!



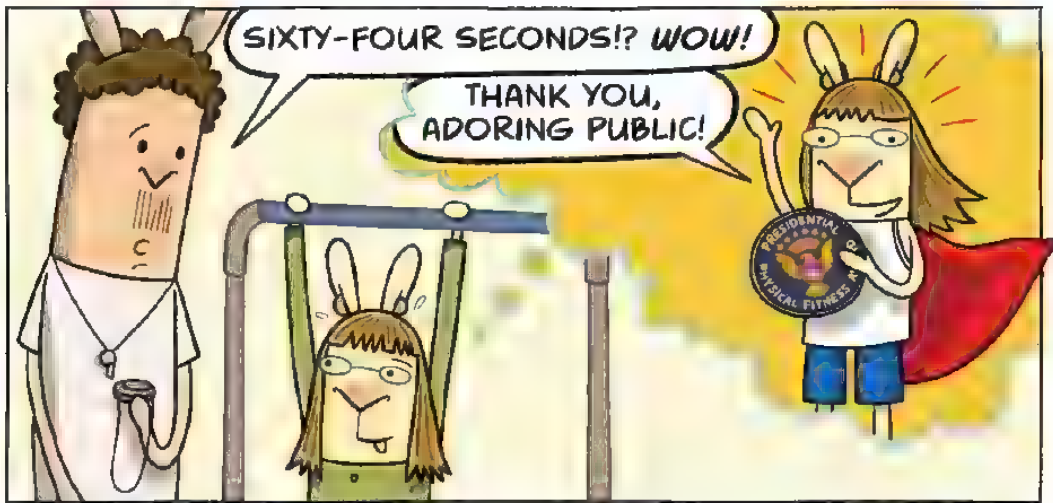
It's a world record! The president of the United States of America himself arrives to present El Deafo with her hard-earned award!

MOVE OVER,  
POTTS!

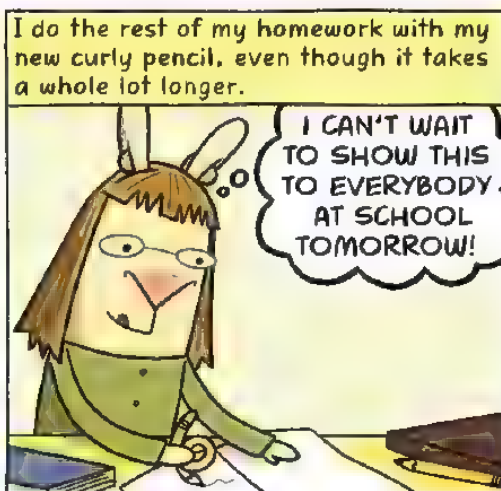
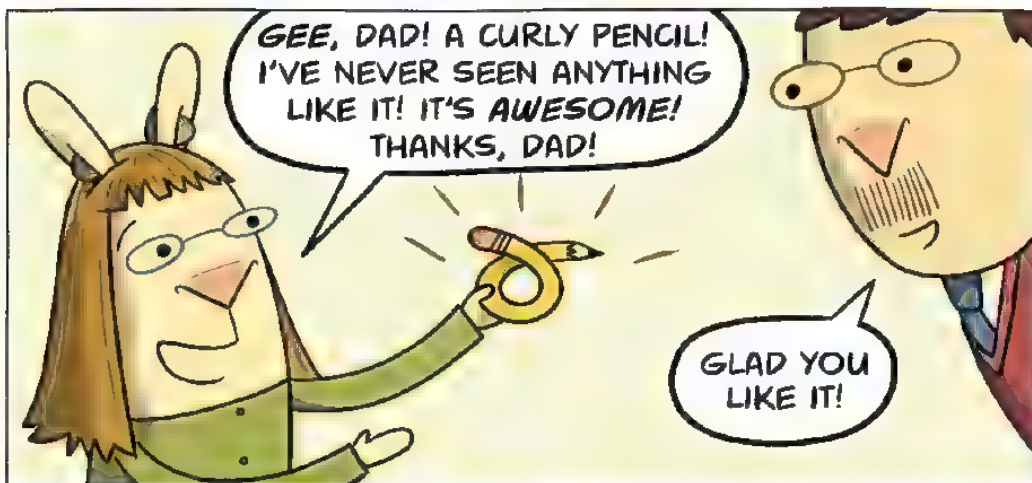
OUR GREAT NATION PRESENTS  
THIS PHYSICAL FITNESS AWARD  
TO YOU, EL DEAFO, FOR YOUR  
REMARKABLE FEATS OF  
SKILL AND TALENT!





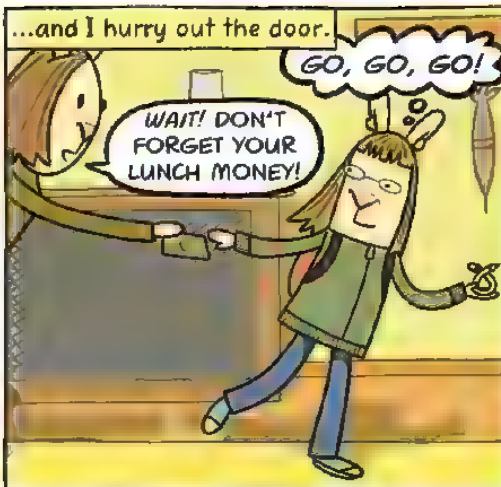
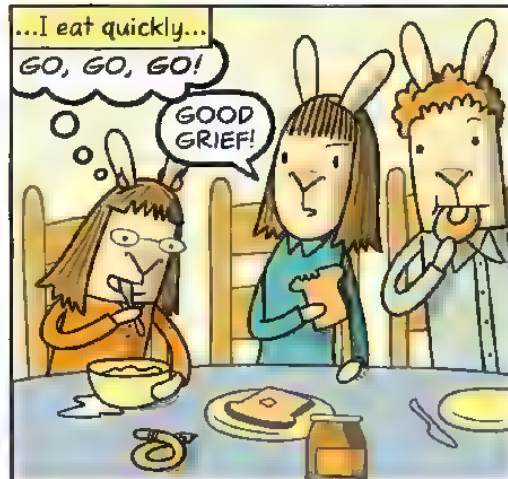


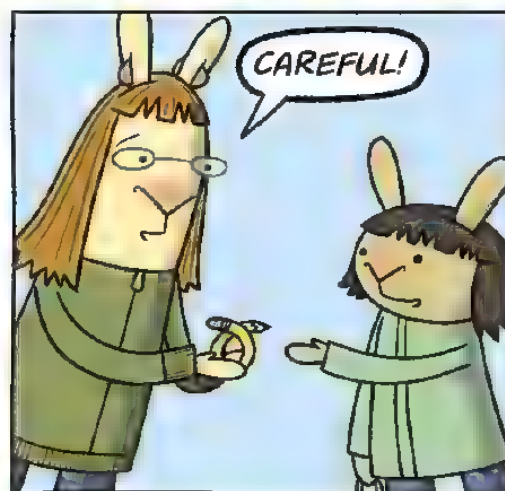
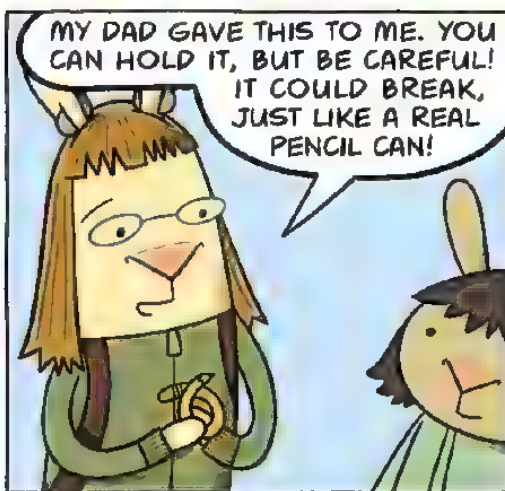
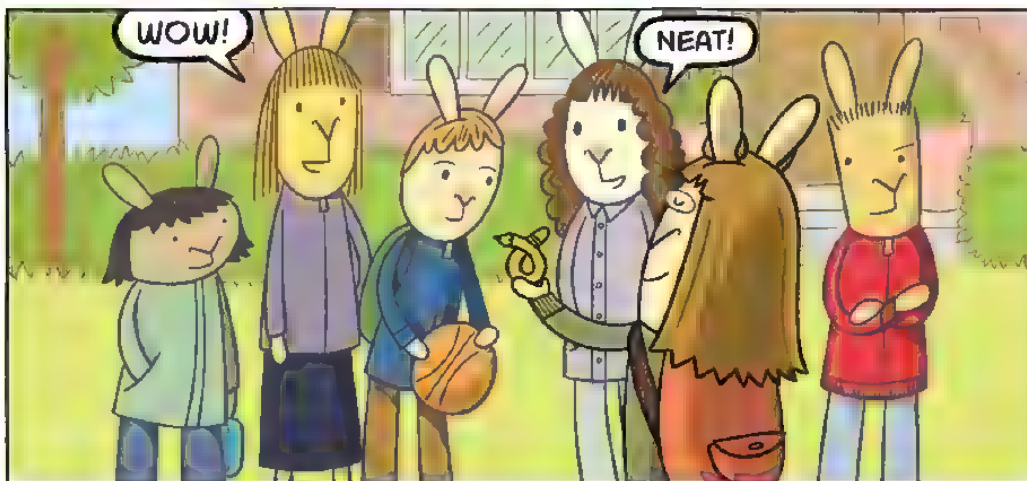
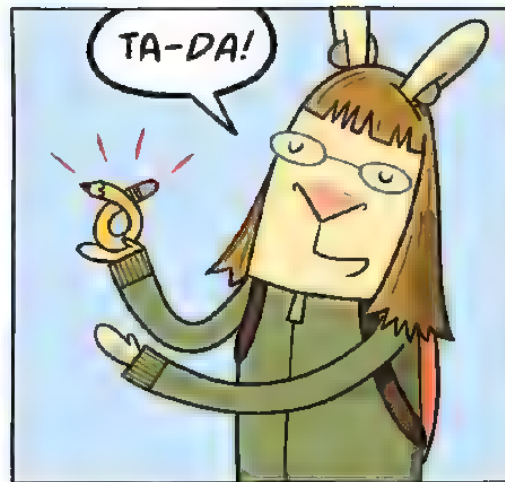


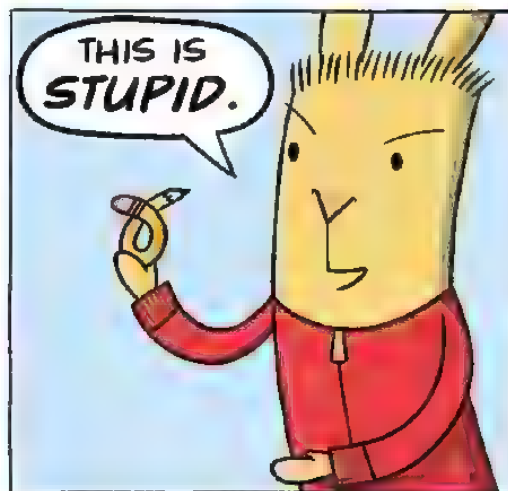
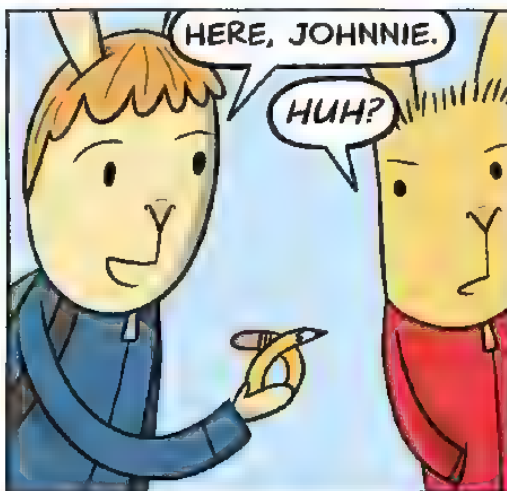
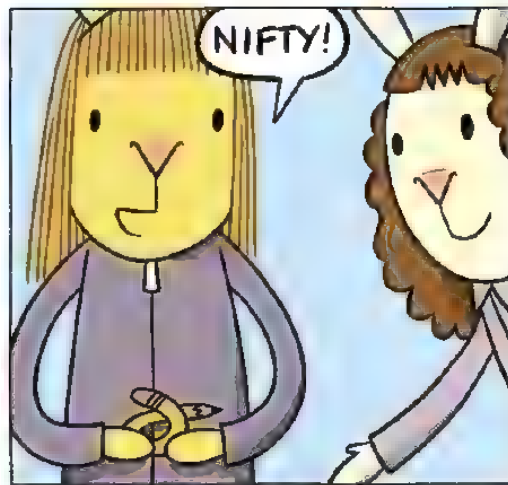




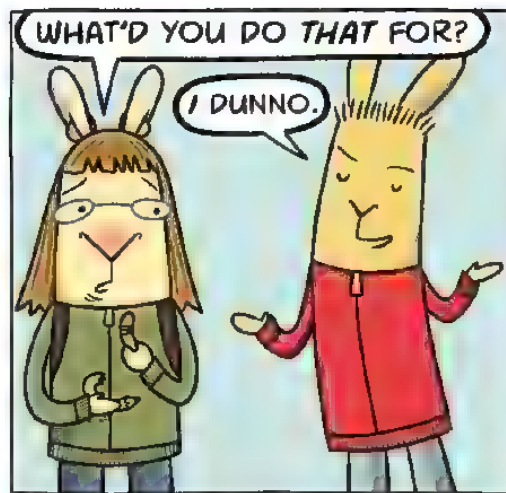
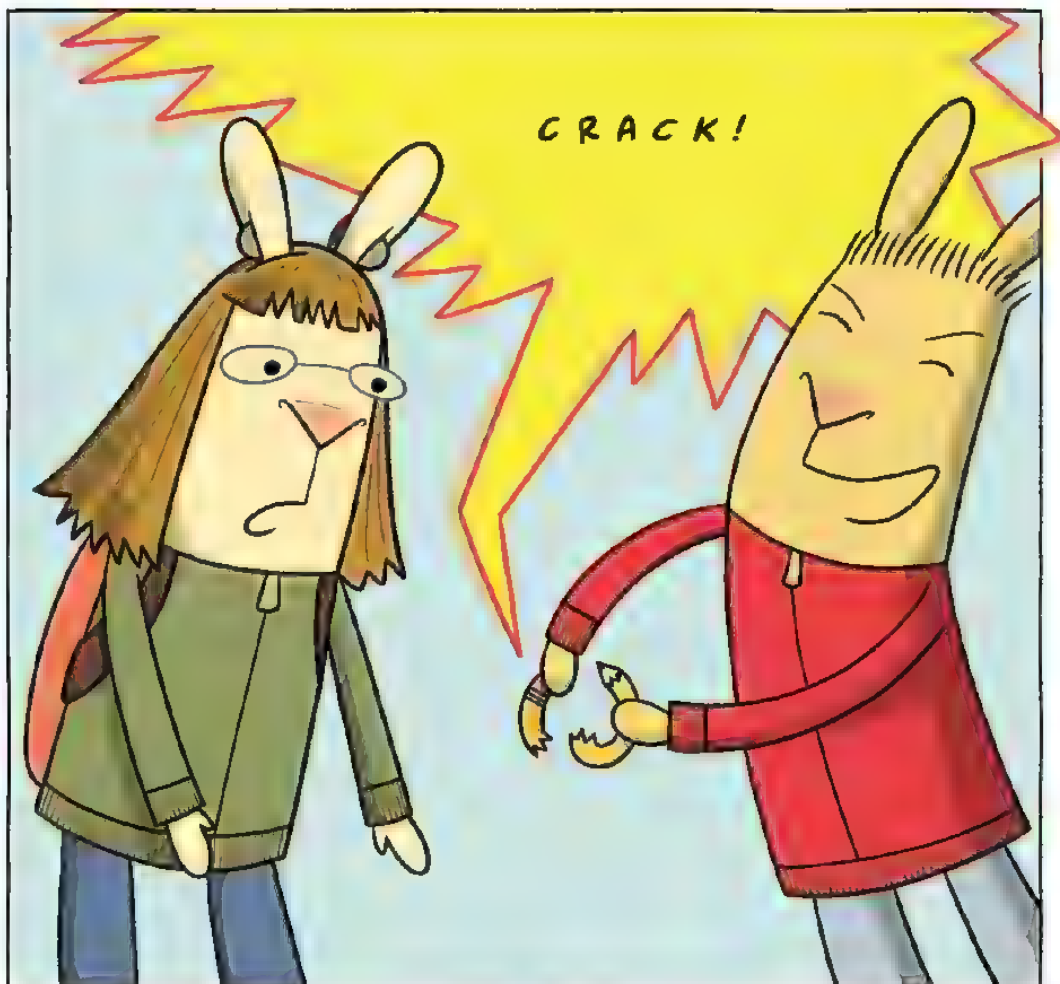
When I wake up the next morning, I don't have the usual sinking feeling that I've had every day since the Phonic Ear broke. Instead, I am excited!

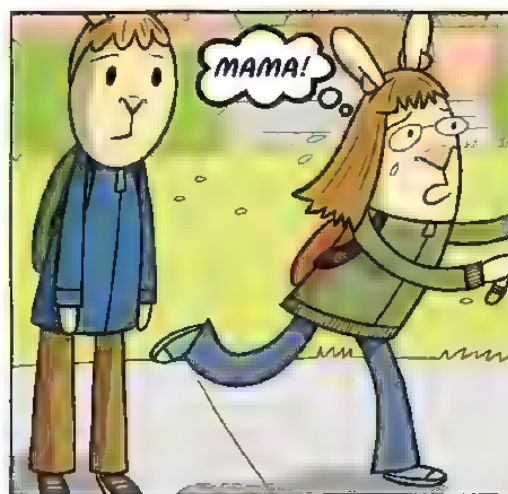
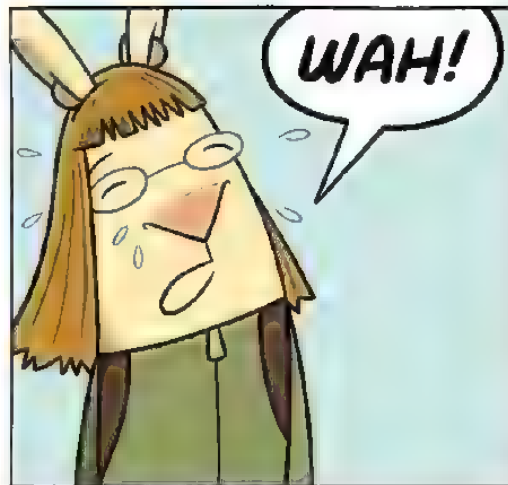


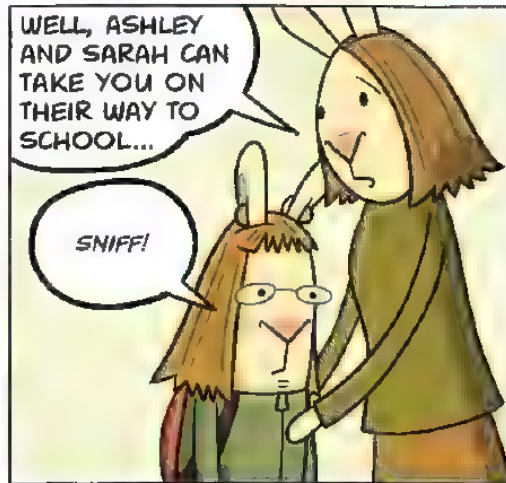










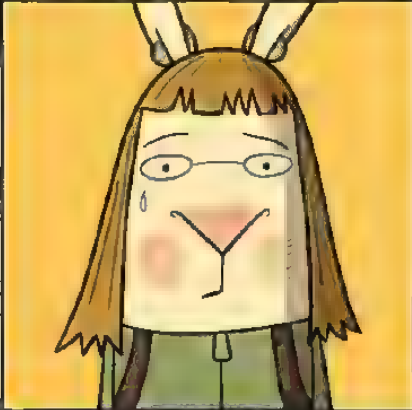




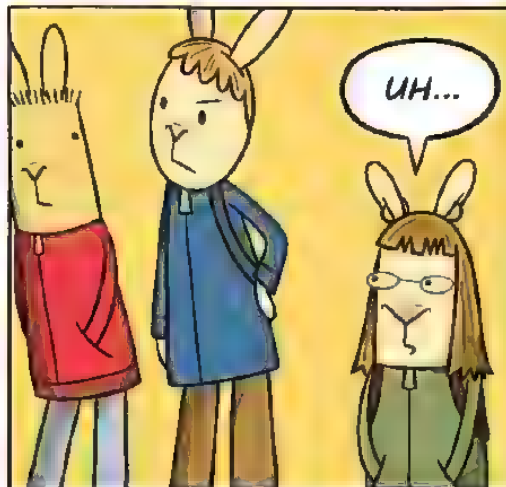
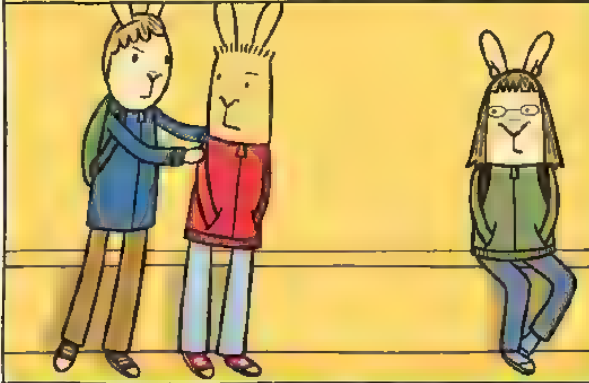
When I get to school, I go to the gym like always and sit in the bleachers. But no way am I sitting with the neighborhood kids—or any other kids, for that matter.

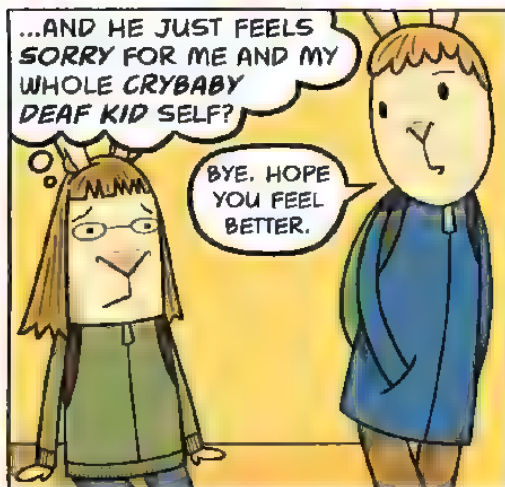
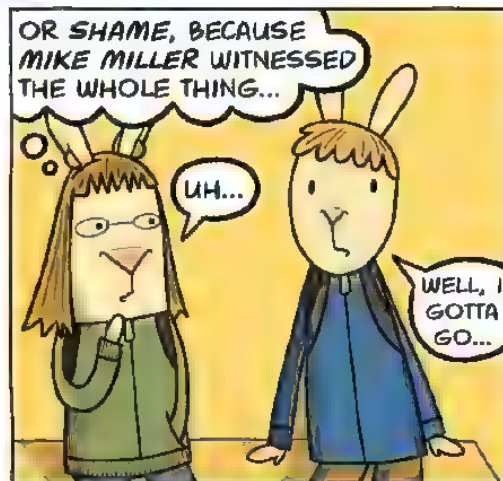
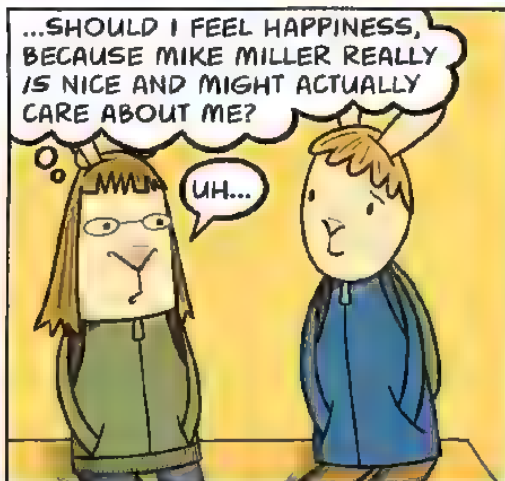
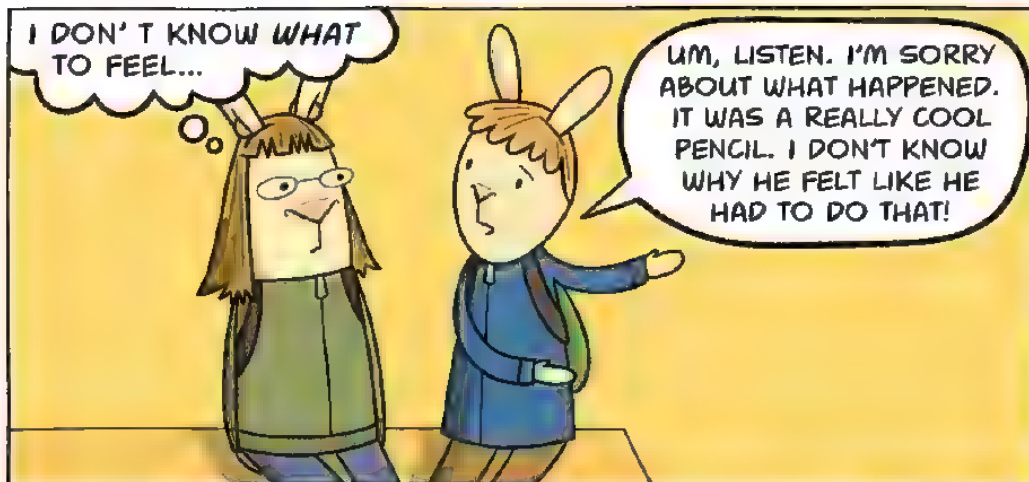


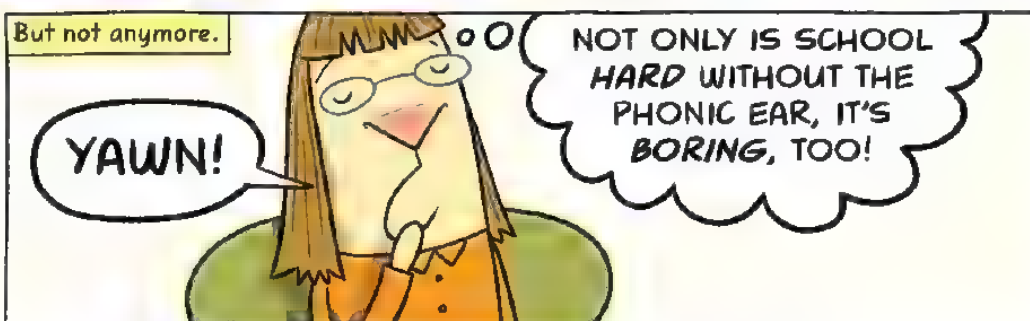
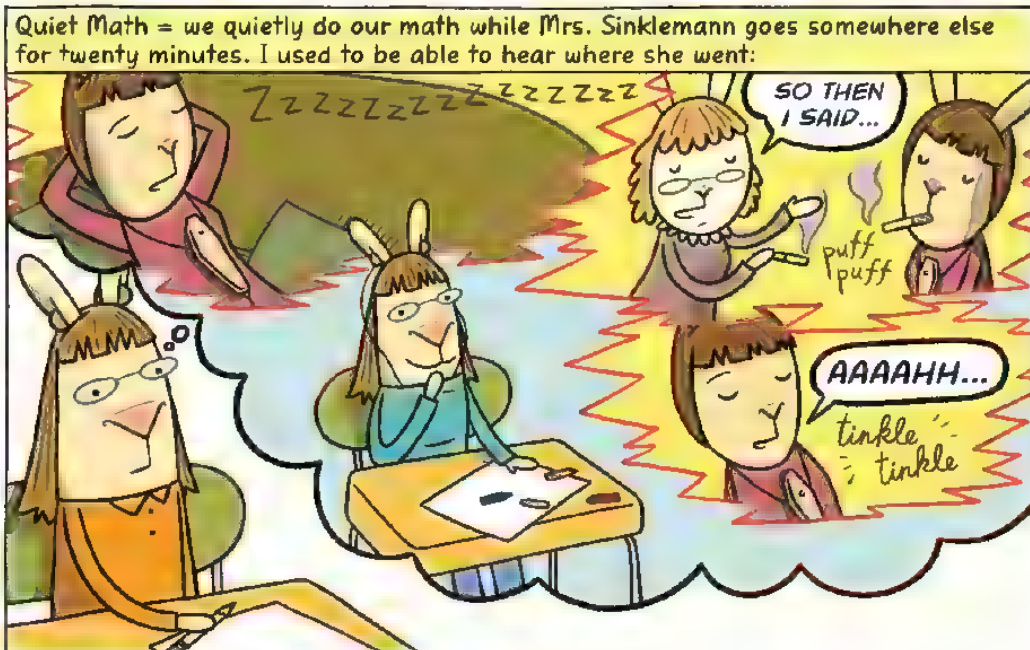
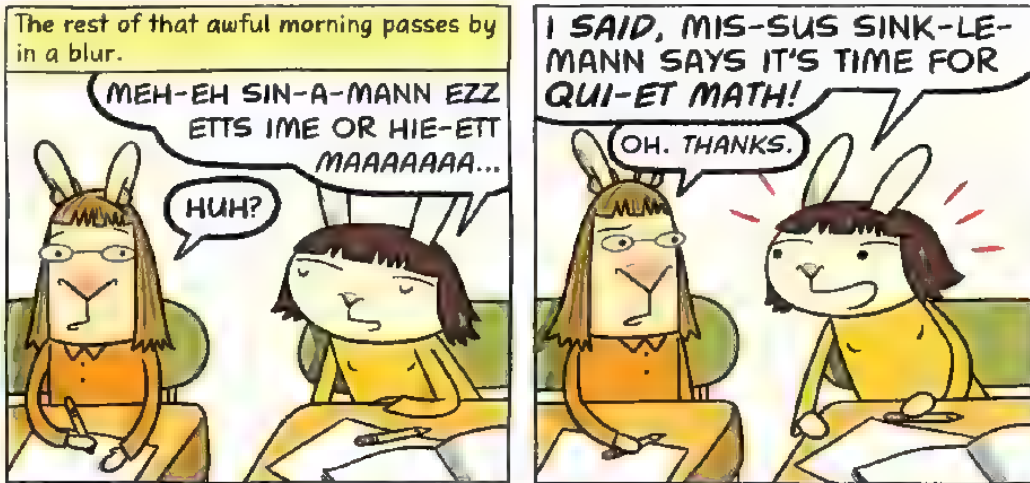
I stare straight ahead and try not to cry anymore.



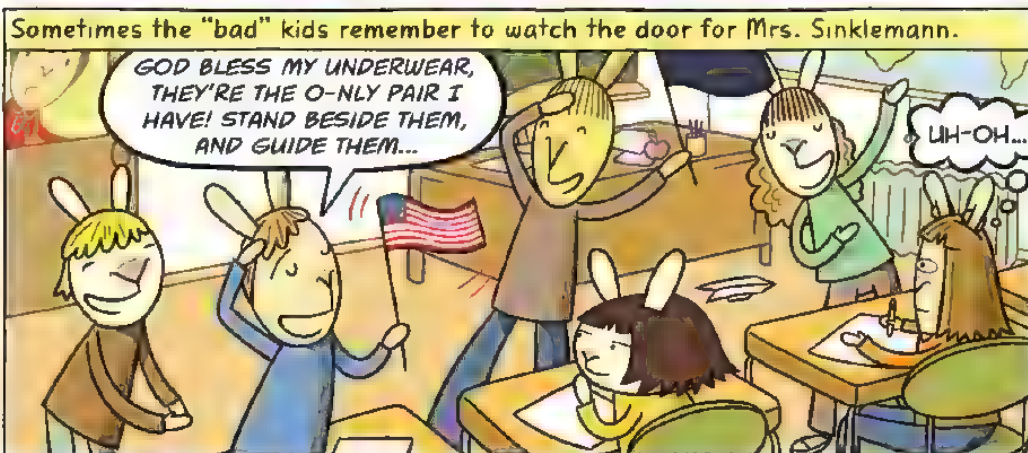
But suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I see somebody coming—it's Johnnie! And he's being pushed toward me by MIKE MILLER!

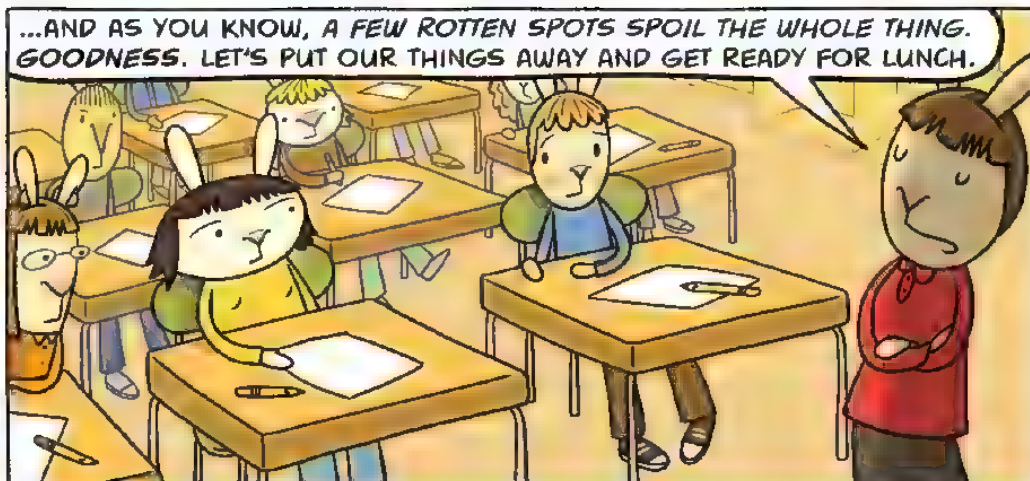
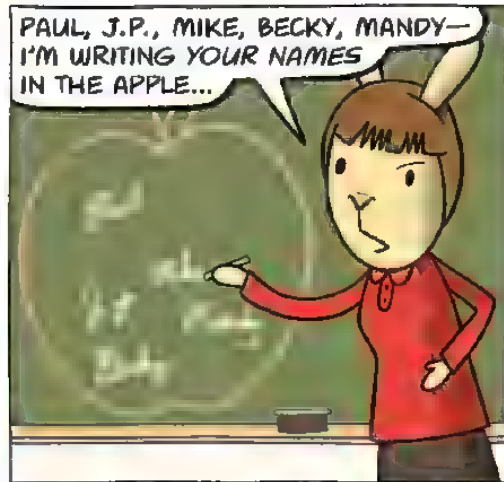
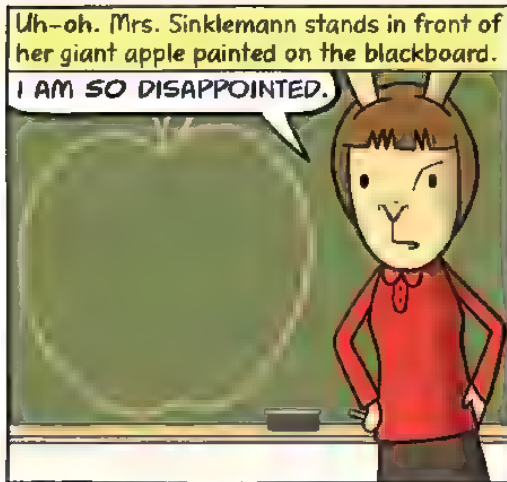


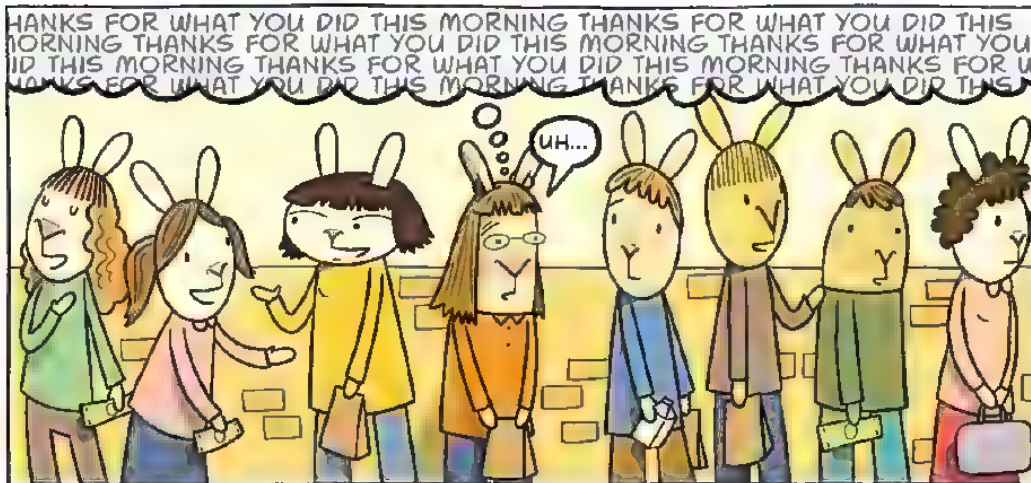
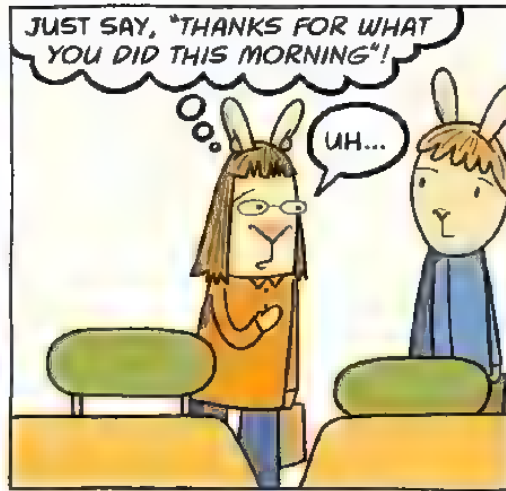






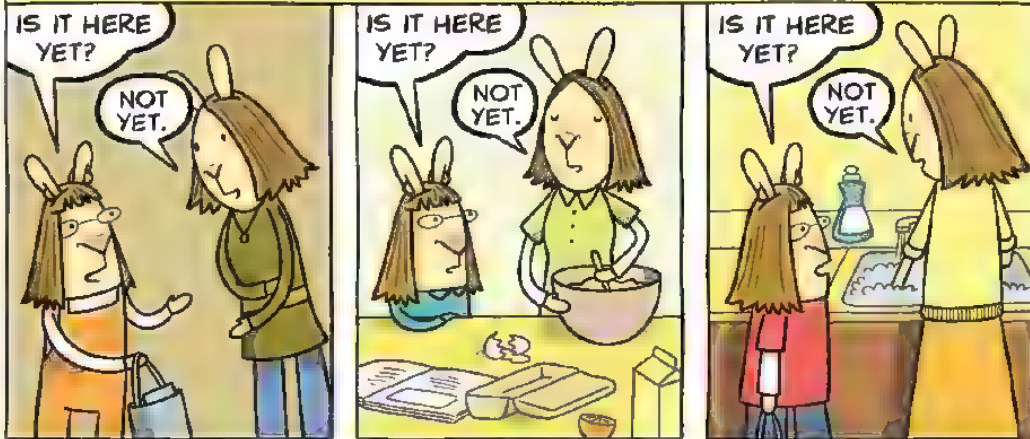




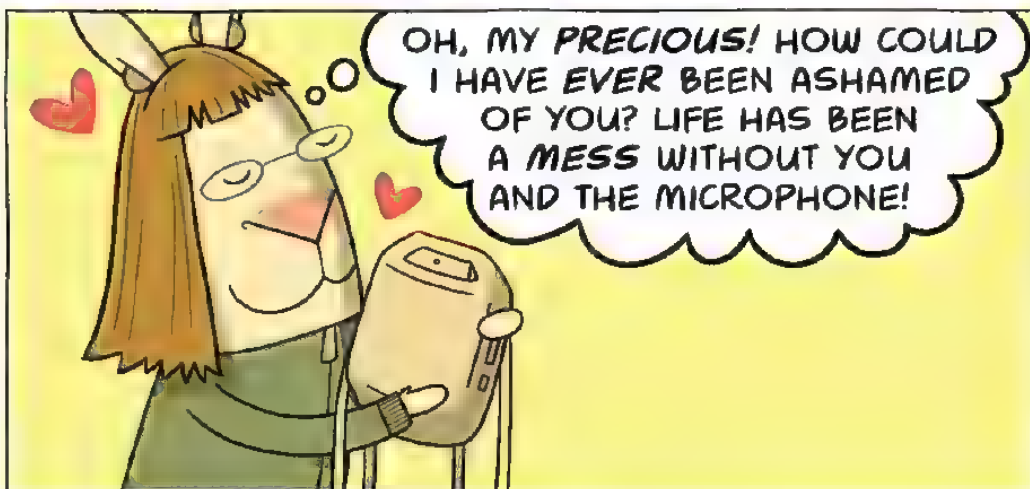
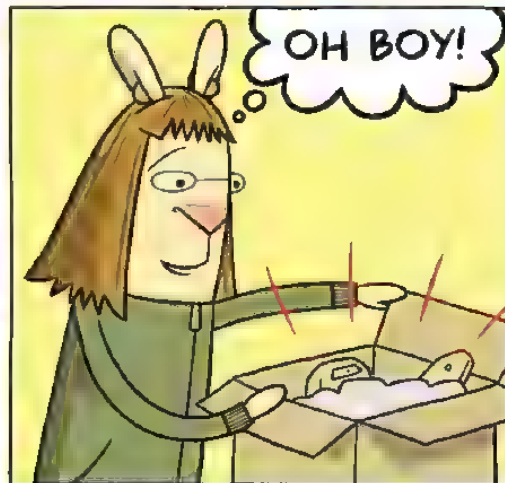
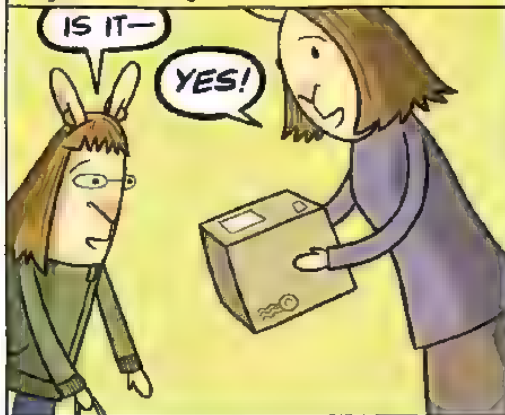




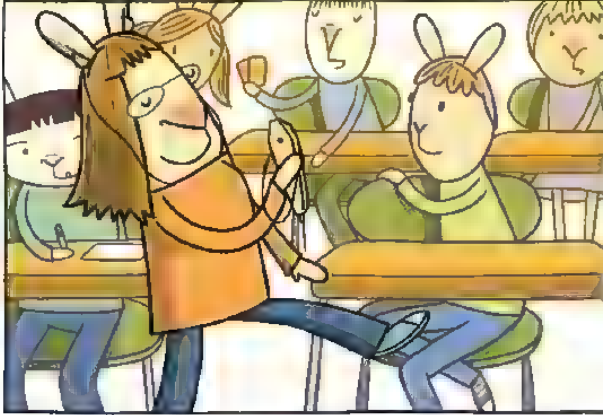
Every day after school, I ask Mom the same question, and I get the same answer:



Until finally, after four weeks and three days of waiting...



The next day at school, I am actually happy to be holding the microphone as I walk past everyone.



OH, IT'S BACK! HOW LOVELY!

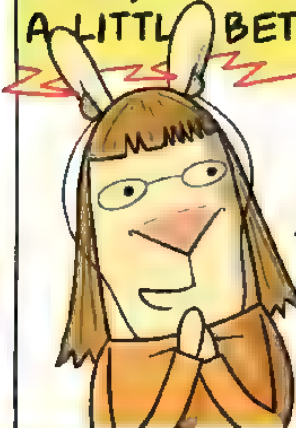


TESTING, 1-2-3...

TESTING,  
1-2-3...

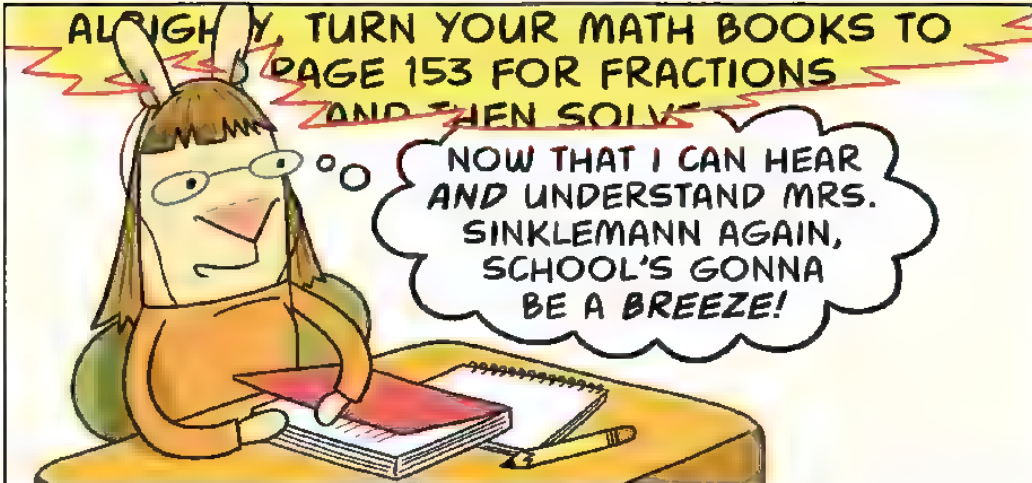


CECE, CAN YOU HEAR ME  
A LITTLE BETTER NOW?



YES!

ALRIGHT, TURN YOUR MATH BOOKS TO  
PAGE 153 FOR FRACTIONS  
AND THEN SOLVE



NOW THAT I CAN HEAR  
AND UNDERSTAND MRS.  
SINKLEMANN AGAIN,  
SCHOOL'S GONNA  
BE A BREEZE!

My day gets even better when Mrs. Sinklemann makes this announcement:

AS YOU MAY KNOW, THE SIXTH-GRADERS ARE GIVING A PRESENTATION CALLED "THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF BOOKS." IT'S A BIG PART OF OUR SCHOOL-WIDE "READING IS FUN" CAMPAIGN.



THE SIXTH-GRADE TEACHERS HAVE REQUESTED TWO FIFTH-GRADERS "ON THE SMALLISH SIDE" TO POSE AS GIANT BOOKENDS ON THE STAGE DURING THE PRESENTATION.



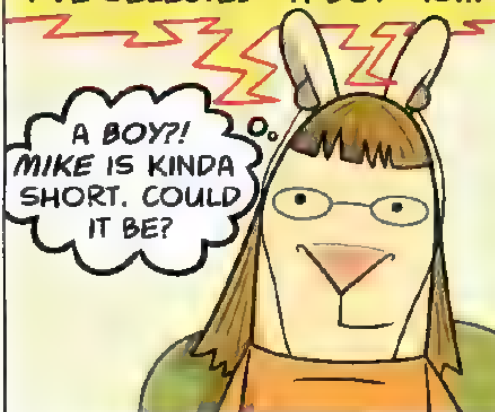
THE FIRST STUDENT I'VE SELECTED IS... CECE BELL!



REALLY!? I GET TO BE ON STAGE AND EVERYTHING? WOW!



AND THE SECOND STUDENT I'VE SELECTED—A BOY—IS...



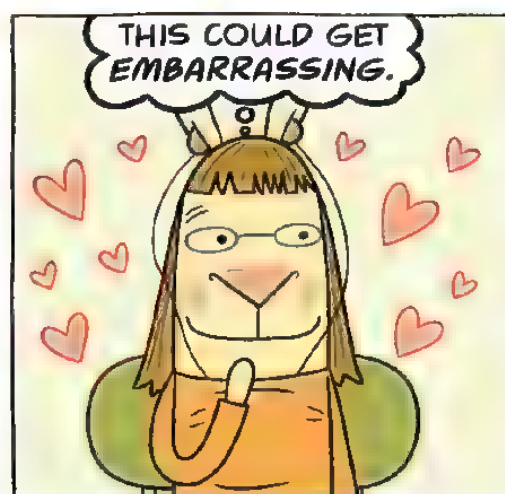
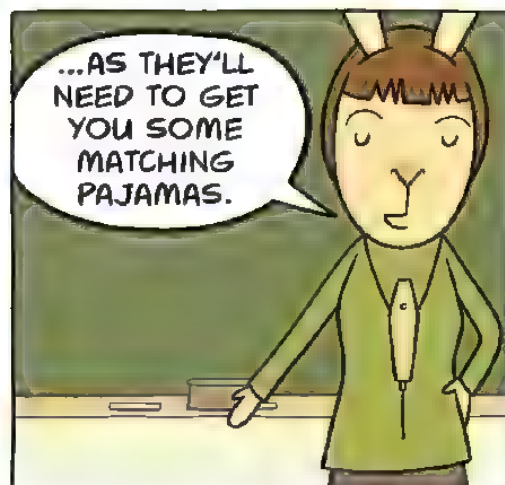
A BOY?! MIKE IS KINDA SHORT. COULD IT BE?

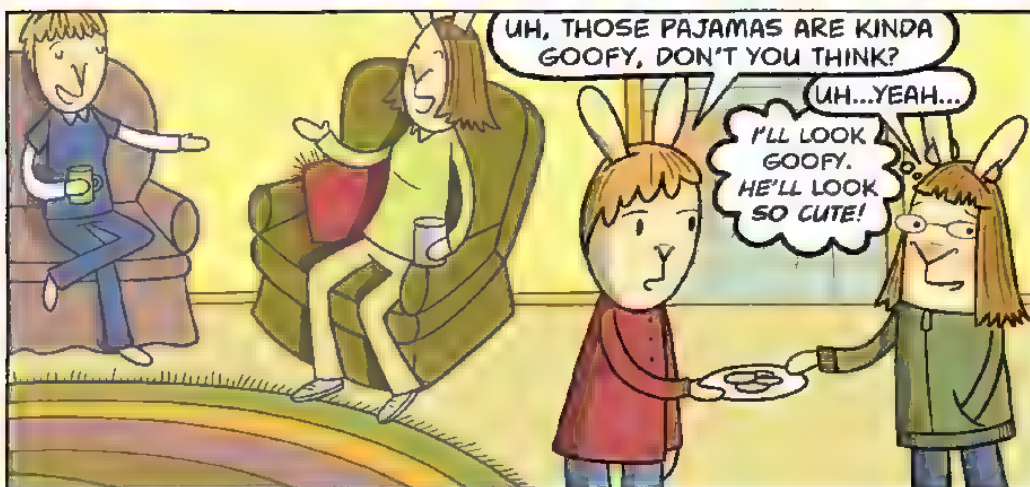
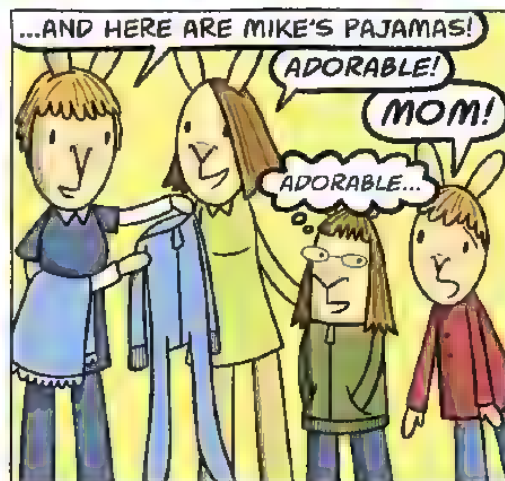
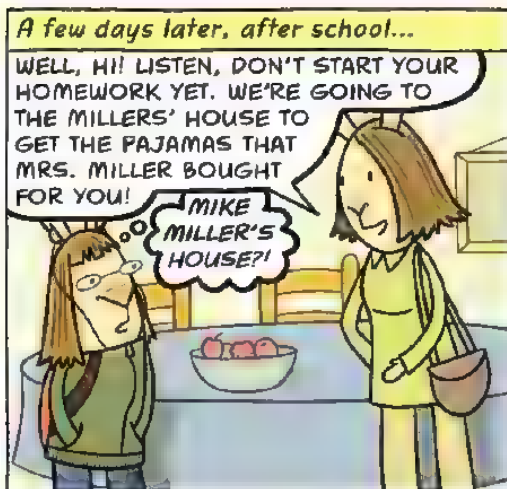
MIKE MILLER!

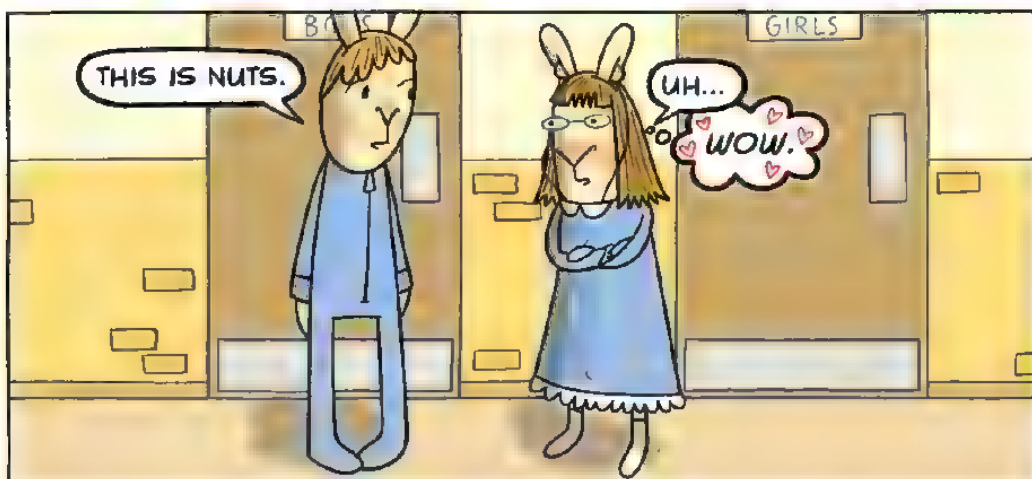


IT IS!



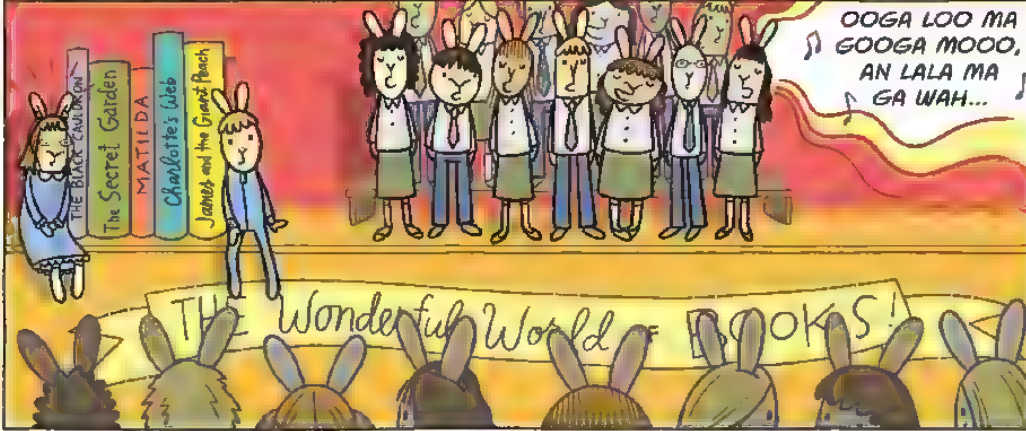






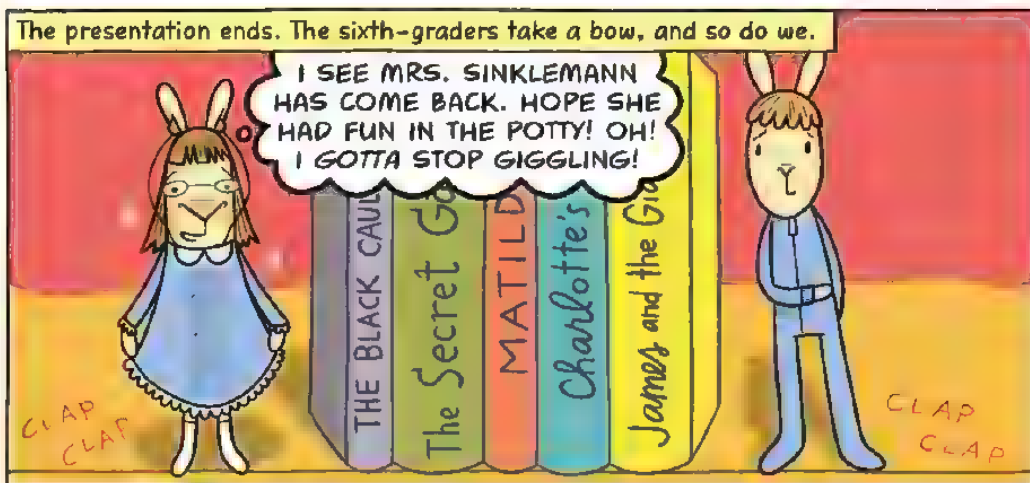


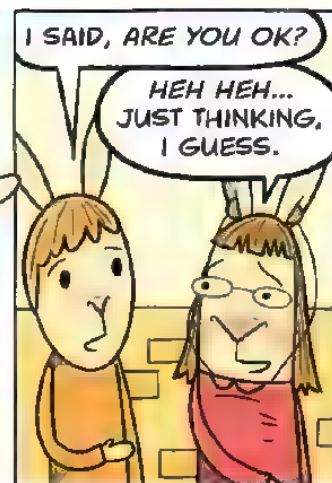
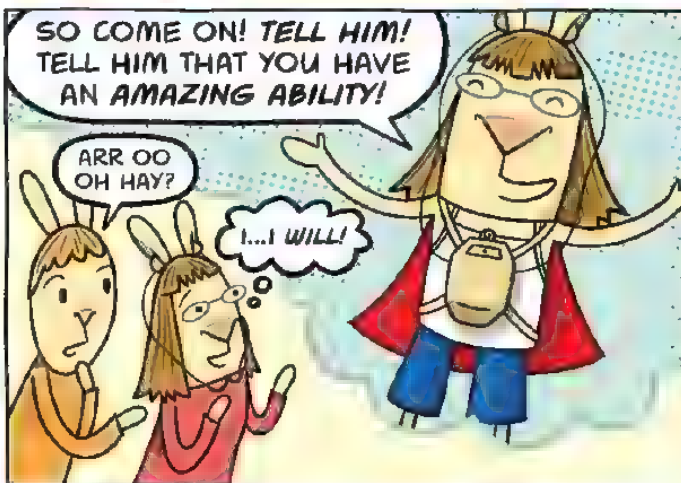
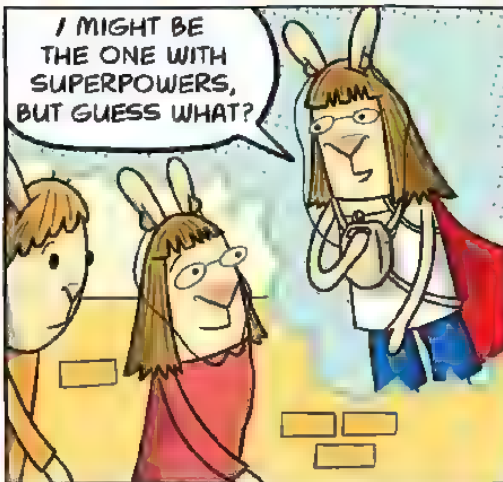
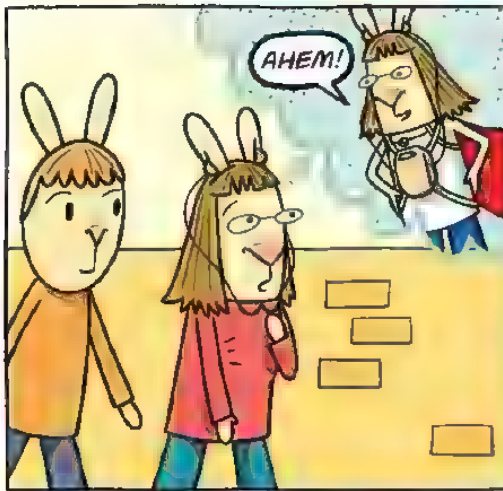
All the classes file in. The sixth-graders start singing. Mike and I sit. And sit. And sit. Suddenly, I hear something weird...



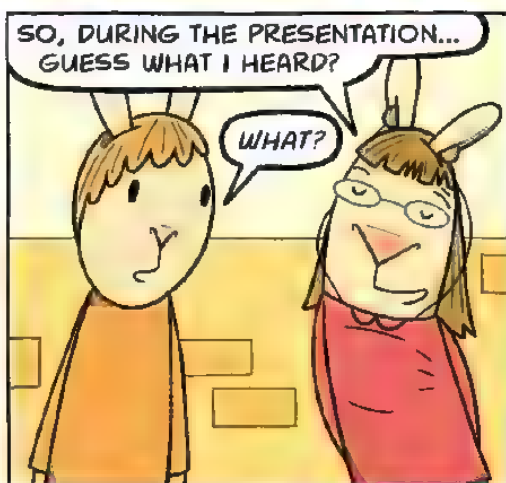
...and it ain't singing!

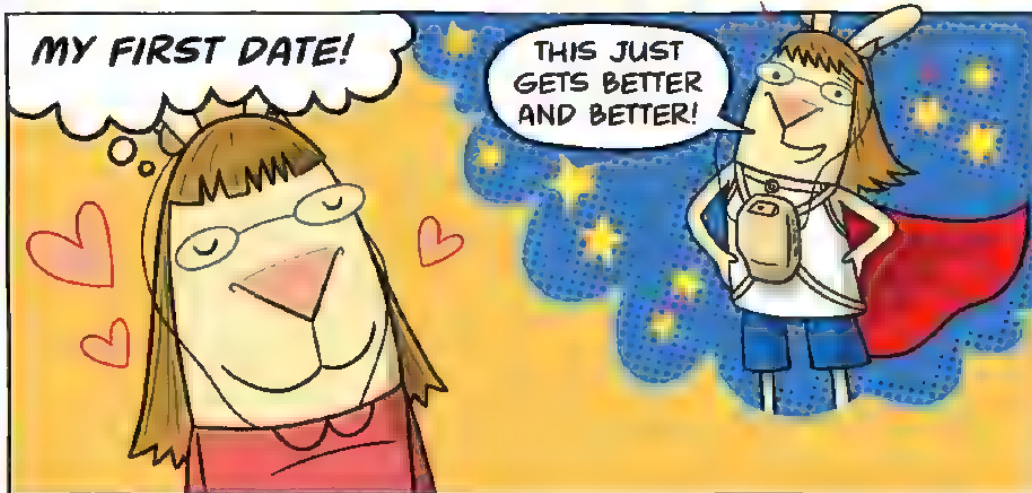
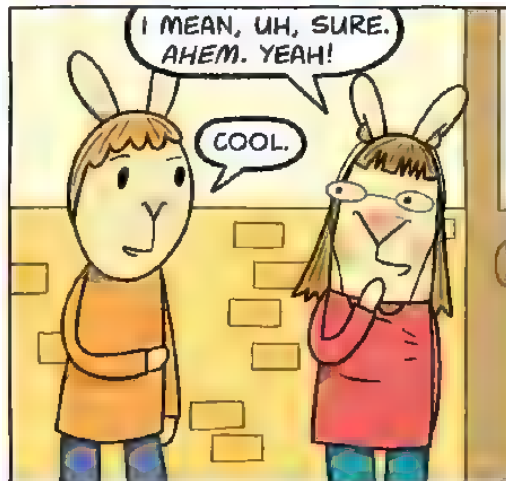
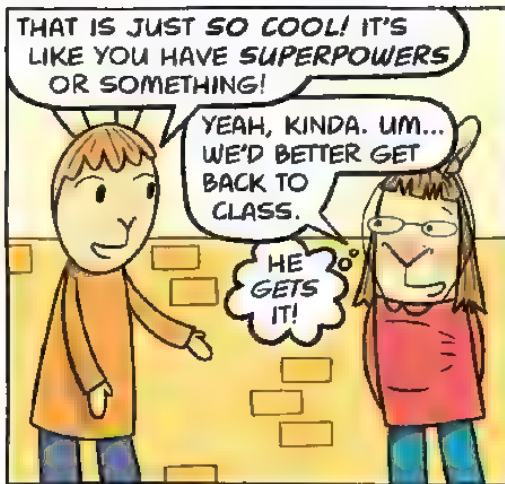












EL DEAFO'S FIRST DATE

FOR YOU, MY DARLING,  
SWEET CHOCOLATES...

POUR  
MOI?

...AND A SINGLE ROSE. ITS BEAUTY  
SHALL NE'ER SURPASS THAT OF THE  
ONE YOU WEAR UPON YOUR BREAST!

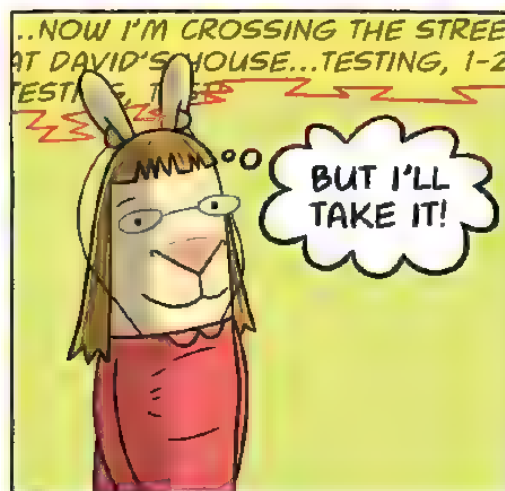
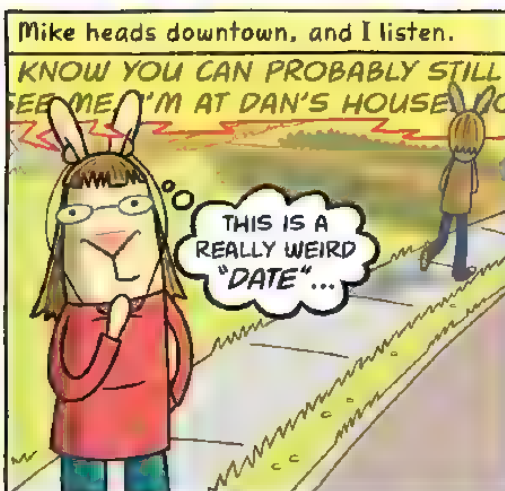
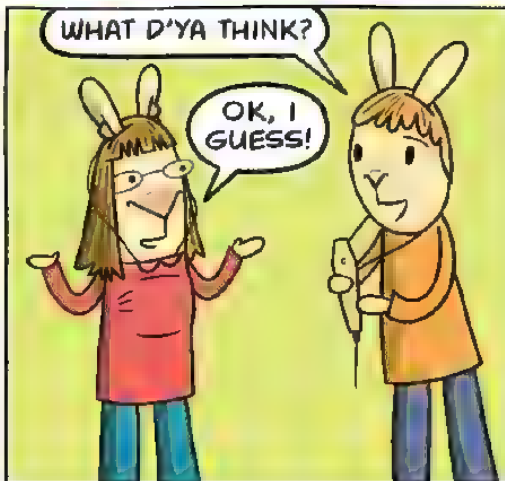
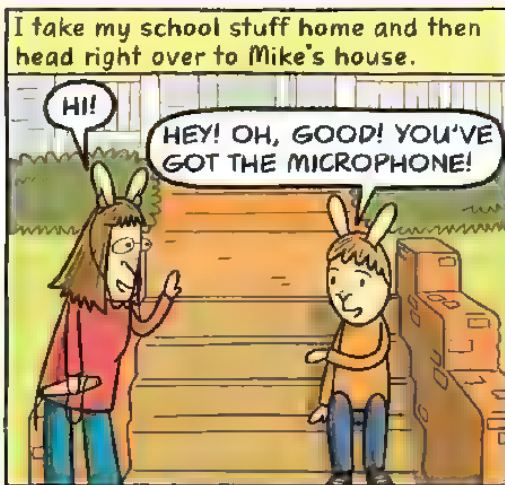
DID HE JUST SAY "BREAST"?

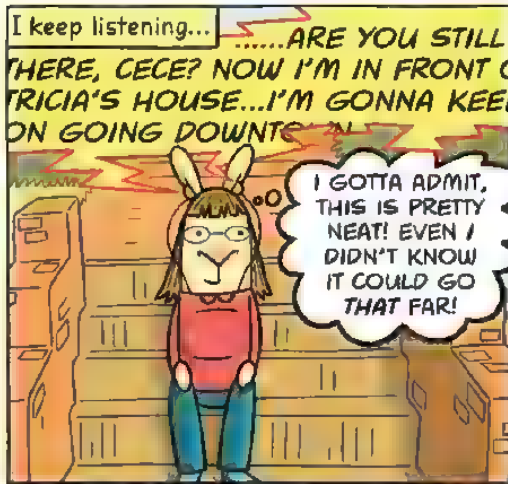
NOW  
KISS  
ME!

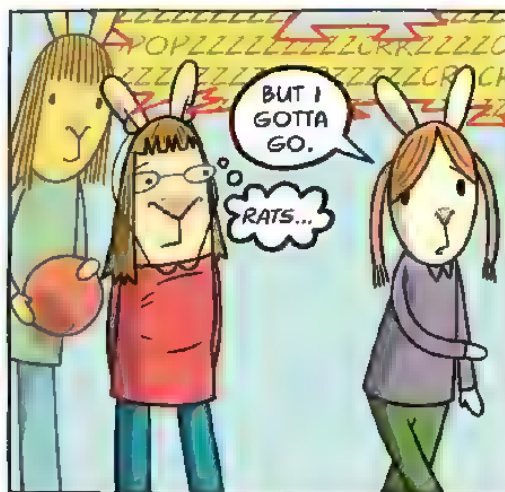
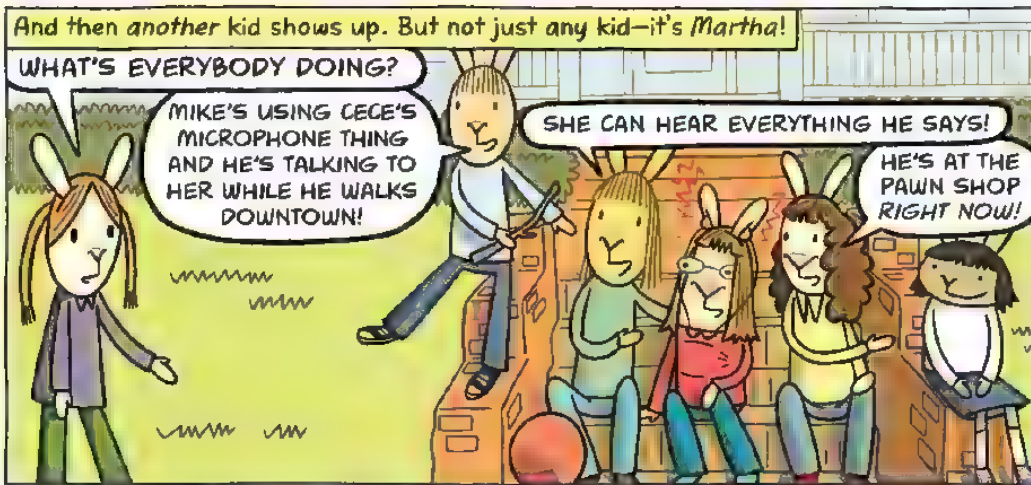
SEE YA SOON! AND WEAR THAT  
HEARING AID—BRING THE  
MICROPHONE, TOO!

HMM...THAT'S  
NOT QUITE  
WHAT I HAD  
IN MIND...

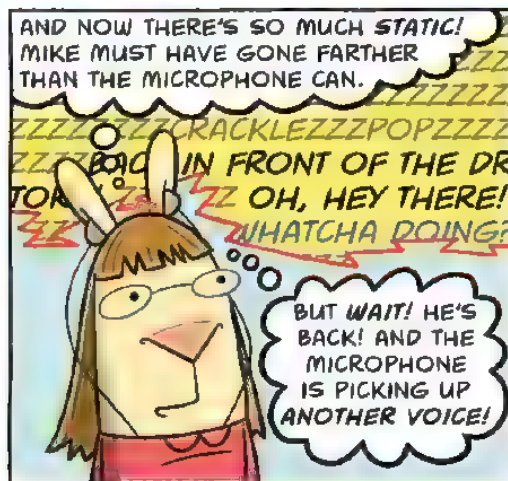
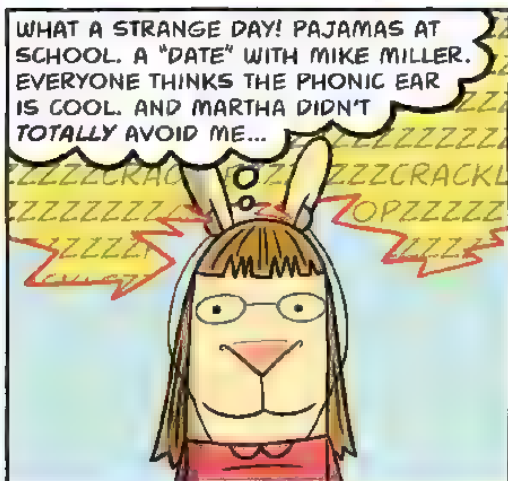












I CAN'T TALK TO HER! YOU SEE, I HURT HER EYE LAST SUMMER, AND IT TOTALLY FREAKED ME OUT!



I MEAN, SHE ALREADY LOST HER HEARING, AND SHE'LL NEVER GET THAT BACK! I THOUGHT I HAD MADE HER BLIND, TOO!

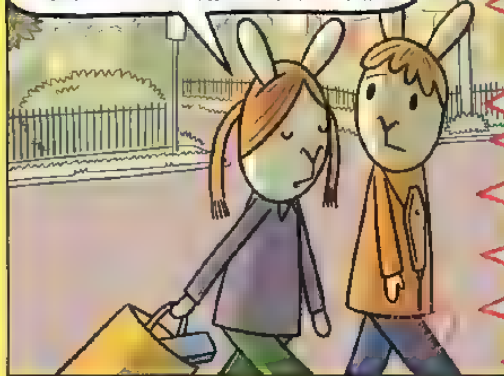
BUT YOU DIDN'T!



I KNOW THAT NOW. BUT I WAS SO AFRAID OF HURTING HER AGAIN THAT I STAYED AWAY.

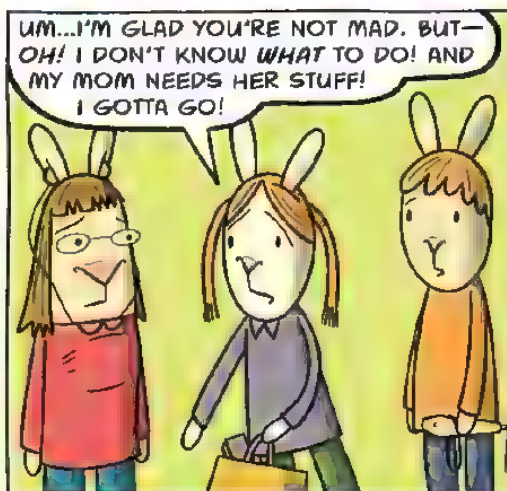
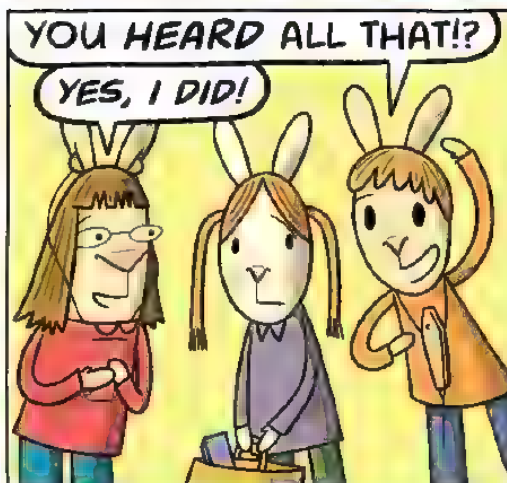


AND NOW I'VE STAYED AWAY SO LONG THAT SHE DOESN'T LIKE ME ANYMORE! I REALLY MISS HER...AND...AND...

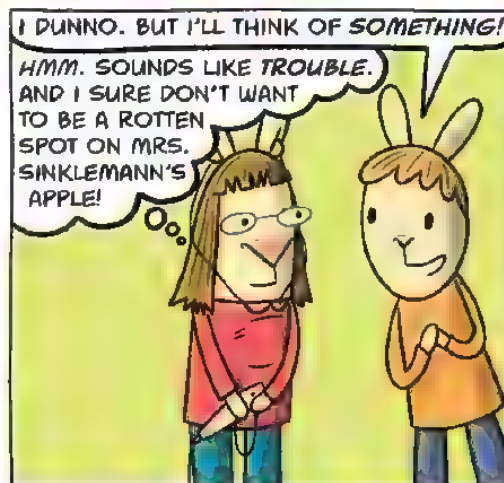


...AND, OH! SHE'S RIGHT THERE, WAITING FOR YOU!

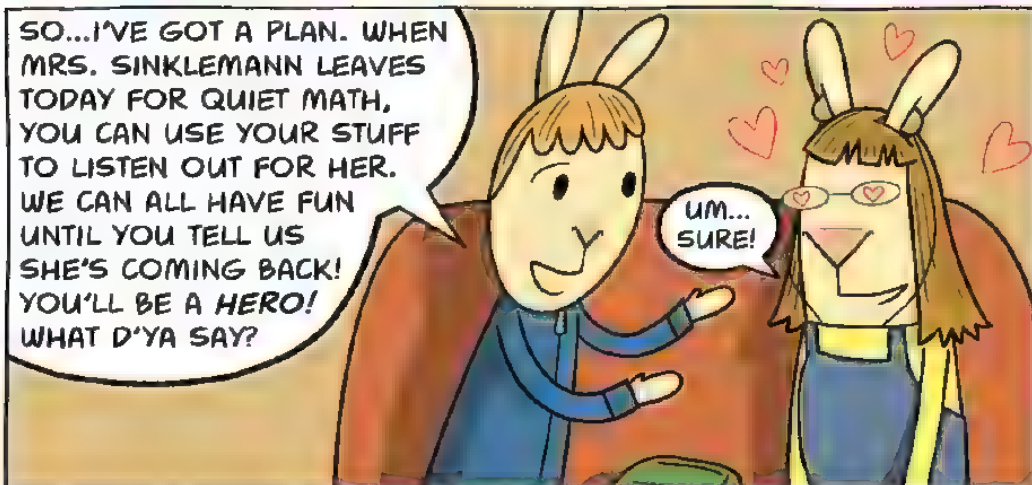
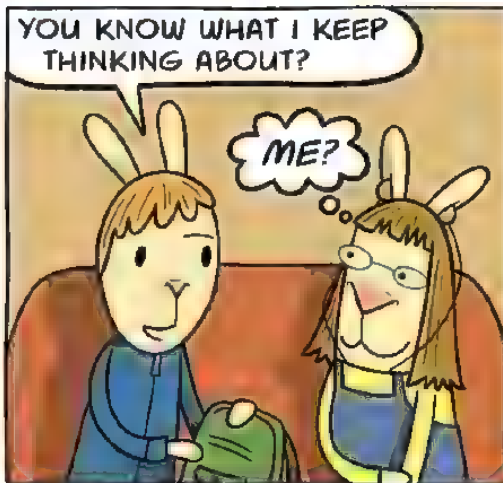








The next morning on the bus, I save a seat for Martha.



Once I'm at school, though, I'm not so sure about Mike's big plan. I can't concentrate on anything, not even on what Mrs. Sinklemann is saying.

WHAT HAVE I JUST AGREED TO DO? AND WHAT IF IT DOESN'T WORK? AND—OH!—WHAT IF I GET IN **BIG TROUBLE**?



MIKE AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS THINK MY HEARING AID IS COOL—BUT WHAT IF MY CLASSMATES DON'T THINK SO?



WILL I BE A HERO? OR WILL I BE HUMILIATED?



Suddenly, Mrs. Sinklemann's voice is all too clear:

CLASS, IT'S TIME TO PUT YOUR ART THINGS AWAY. QUIET MATH IS STARTING SOON!

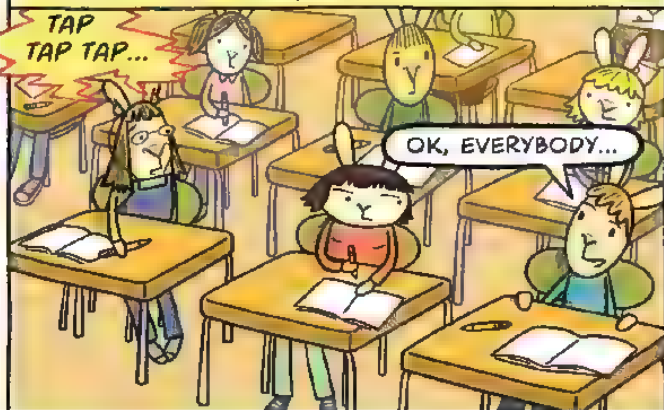
BE GOOD, EVERYONE! I'LL BE BACK IN TWENTY MINUTES!

WHAT!? ALREADY?





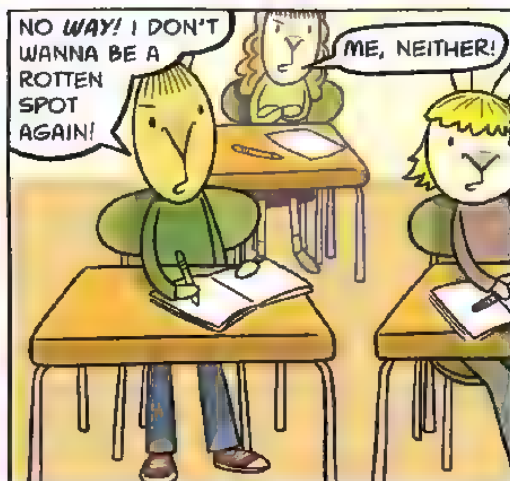
I hear the tap of Mrs. Sinklemann's shoes as she goes up the stairs. Can I really do what Mike wants me to do?



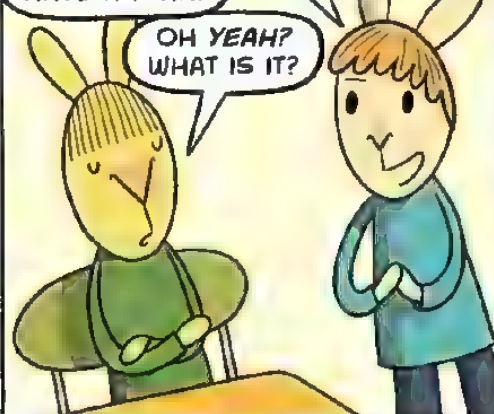
LET'S PARTY!



NO WAY! I DON'T WANNA BE A ROTTEN SPOT AGAIN!



DON'T WORRY! ME AND CECE HAVE A PLAN!

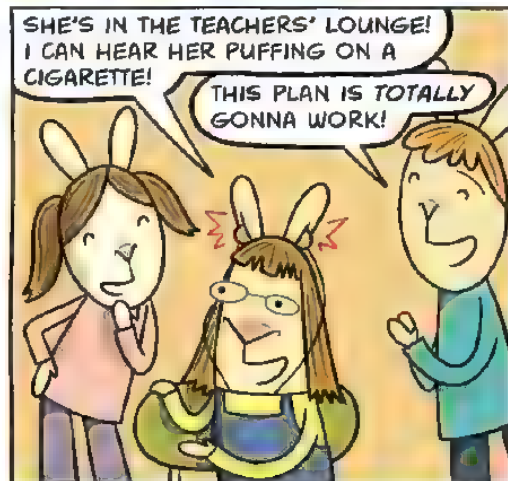
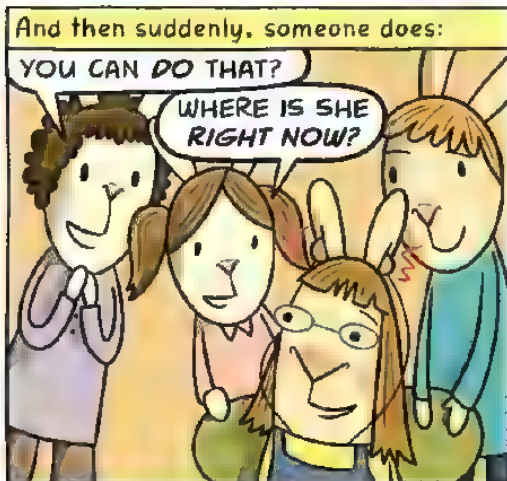


CECE'S HEARING AID LETS HER HEAR MRS. SINKLEMANN WHEREVER SHE IS IN THE WHOLE BUILDING! SO CECE'S GONNA LISTEN OUT FOR HER AND TELL US WHEN SHE'S COMING BACK! WE CAN SNEAK BACK TO OUR DESKS—AND MRS. SINKLEMANN WILL NEVER HAVE TO KNOW!



OH BOY. WHAT'S EVERYBODY GONNA THINK OF ME NOW?





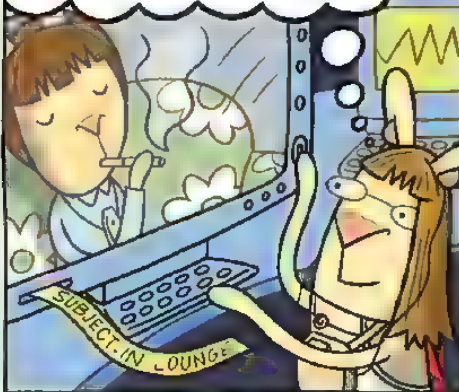
My classmates are having the time of their lives. I think about joining them, but I've got an important job to do. So I watch—and I listen.





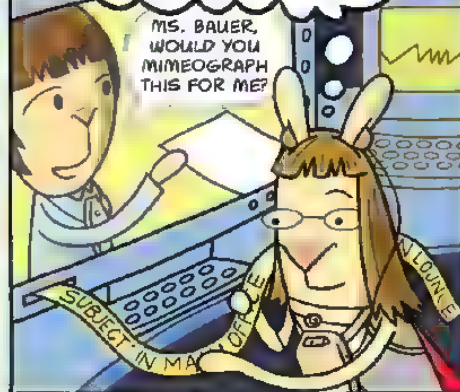
For the first time ever, El Deafo uses her superpowers for the good of others. By listening carefully, she cleverly deduces Mrs. Sinklemann's location at all times...

FUNNY—I MAY BE INSIDE THE BUBBLE OF LONELINESS...



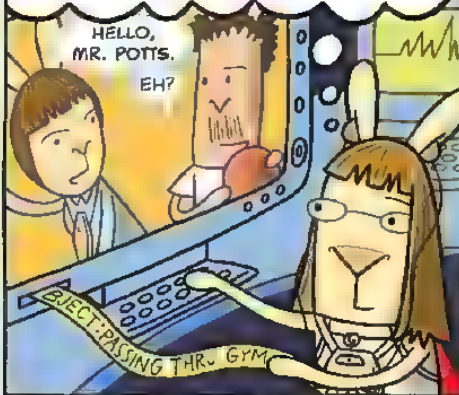
...BUT IT'S NOT SO LONELY ANYMORE!

MS. BAUER, WOULD YOU MIMEOGRAPH THIS FOR ME?



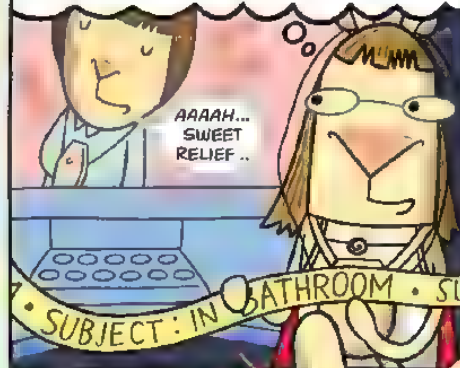
IT'S ACTUALLY KIND OF FUN TO SHARE MY SUPERPOWERS—

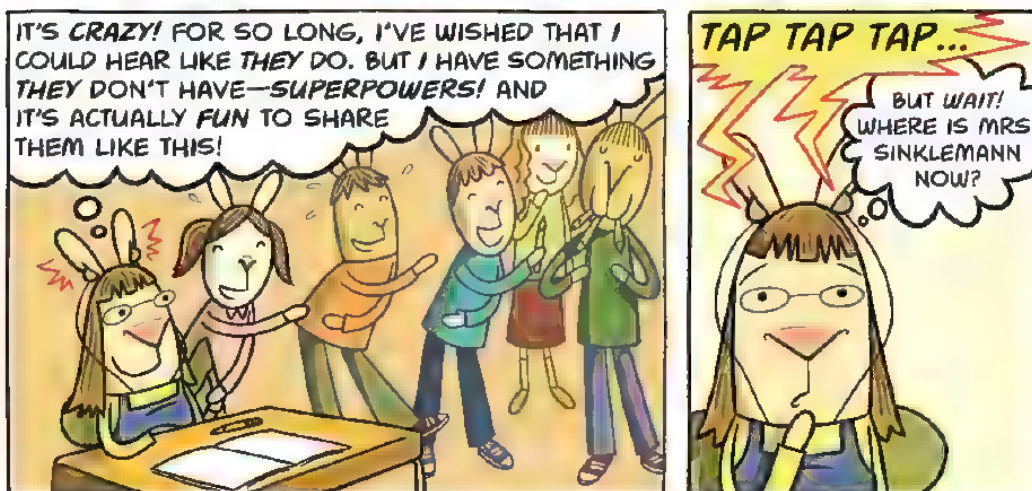
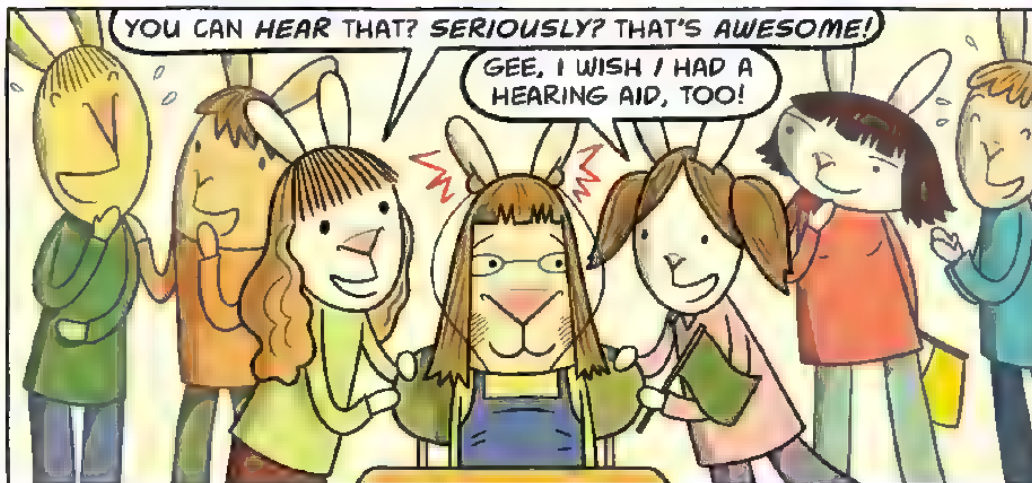
HELLO, MR. POTTS. EH?

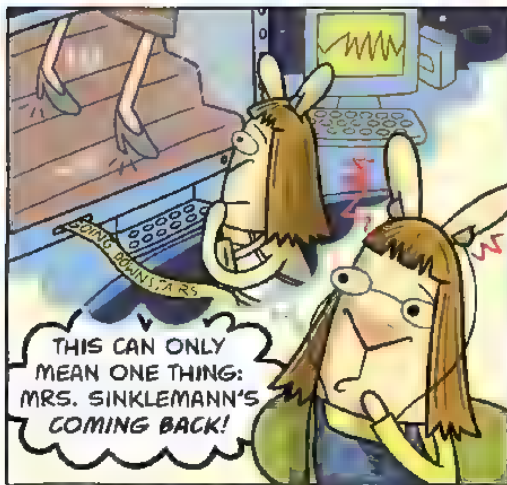


AND JUST WAIT TILL THEY ALL FIND OUT THAT I CAN HEAR MRS. SINKLEMANN USING THE POTTY!

AAAAH... SWEET RELIEF..

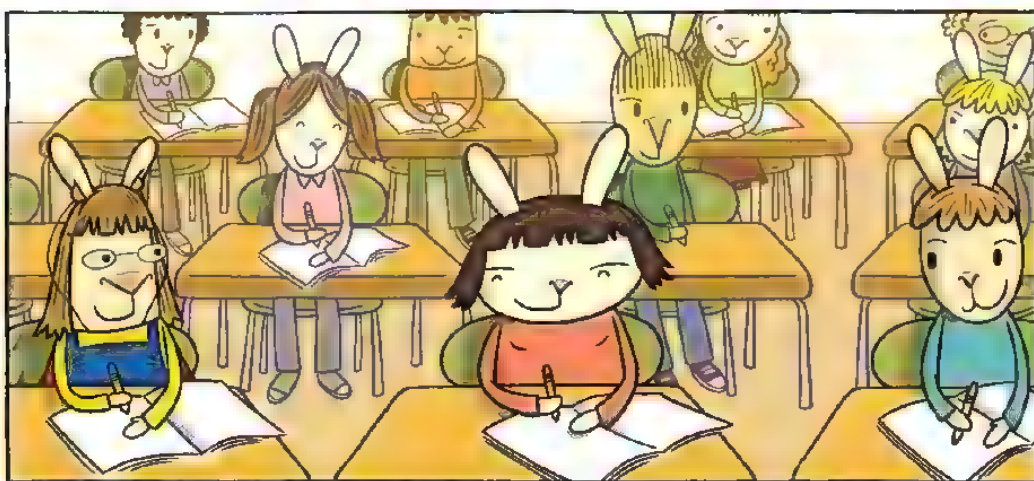
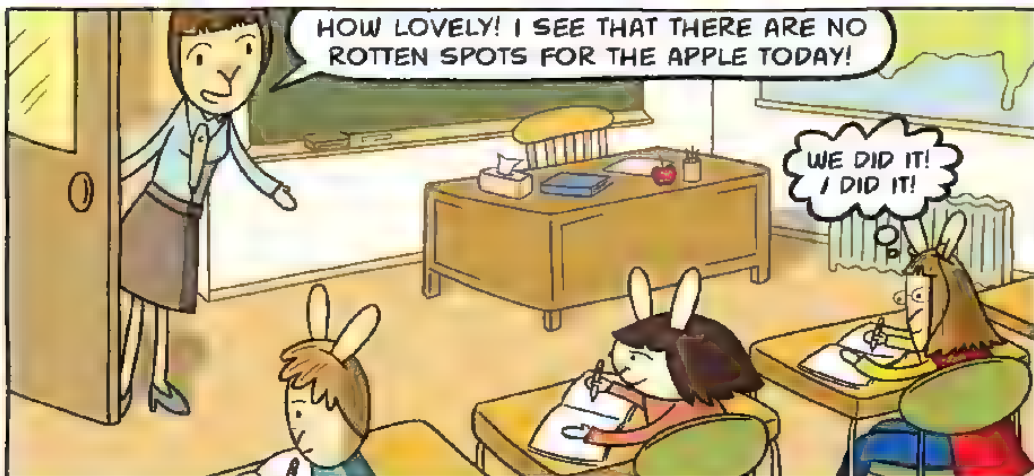


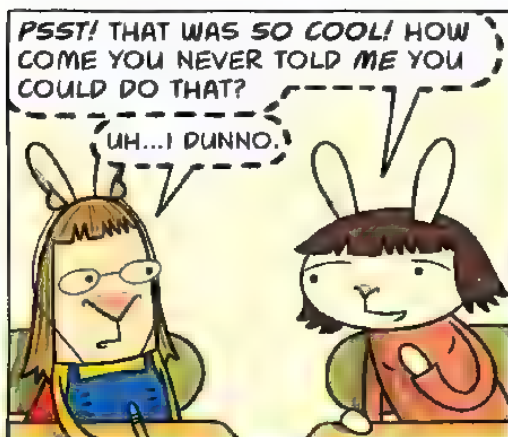














The next morning, during a brief recess before Quiet Math, we come up with a new plan.

I BROUGHT MY QUEEN RECORD! WE CAN PLAY IT TODAY DURING QUIET MATH!  
LIKE A REAL PARTY, WITH MUSIC!

I'LL LISTEN OUT FOR US AGAIN!

UH...GUYS? MRS. SINKLEMANN  
WANTS US OVER AT THE RUG...



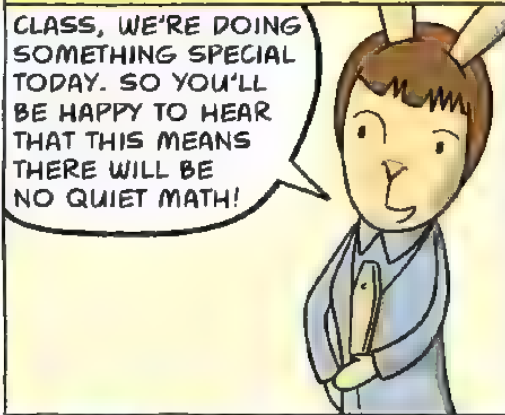
We take our seats on the rug...

IT'S CRAZY! YESTERDAY I WAS  
SCARED TO DO THE PLAN.  
TODAY I'M EXCITED!

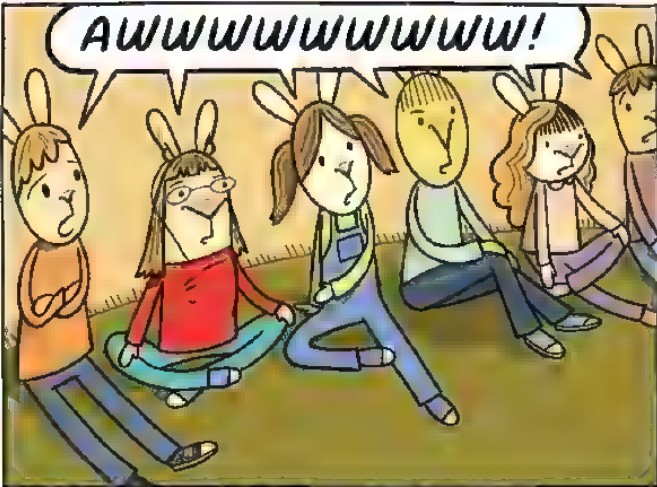


...and then Mrs. Sinklemann makes an announcement.

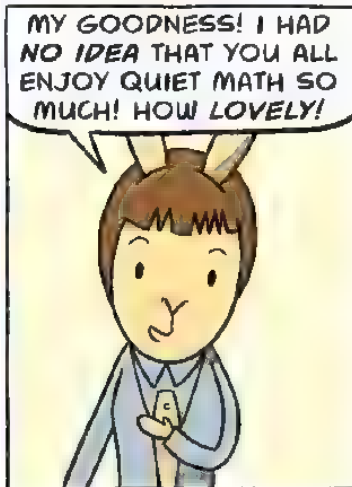
CLASS, WE'RE DOING  
SOMETHING SPECIAL  
TODAY. SO YOU'LL  
BE HAPPY TO HEAR  
THAT THIS MEANS  
THERE WILL BE  
NO QUIET MATH!

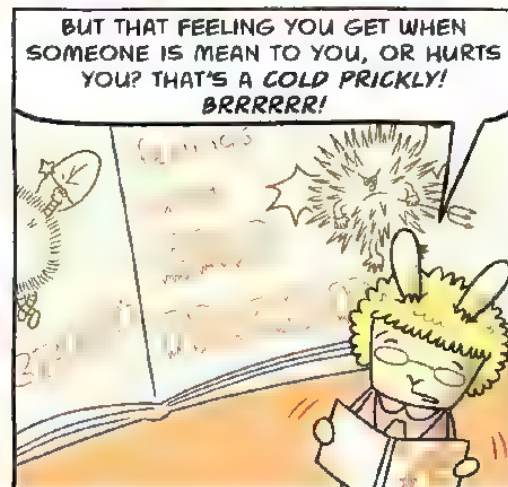
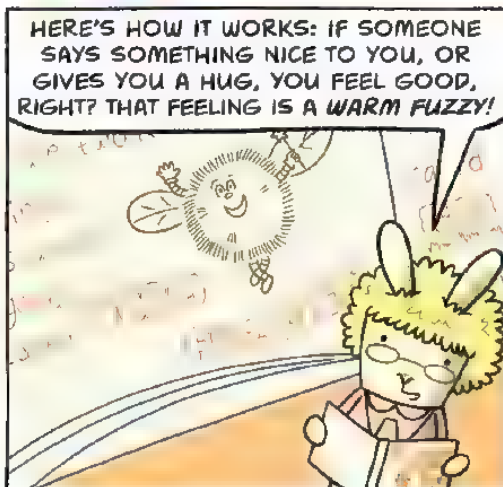
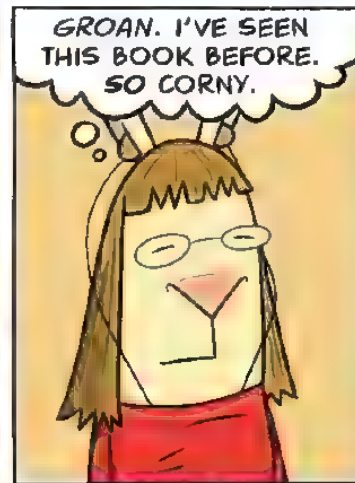
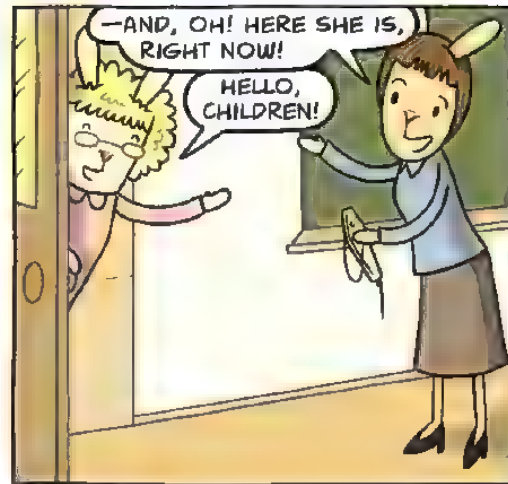


AWWWWWWWWW!



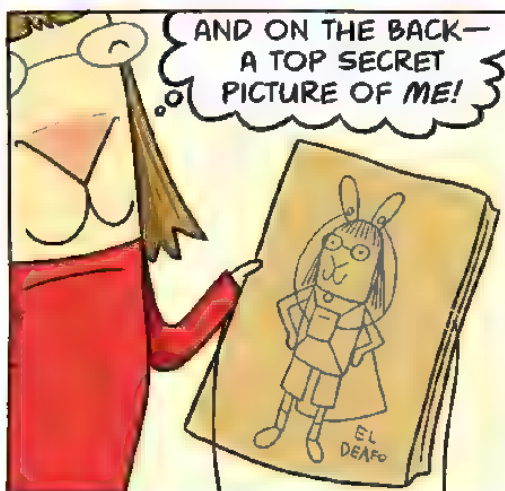
MY GOODNESS! I HAD  
NO IDEA THAT YOU ALL  
ENJOY QUIET MATH SO  
MUCH! HOW LOVELY!

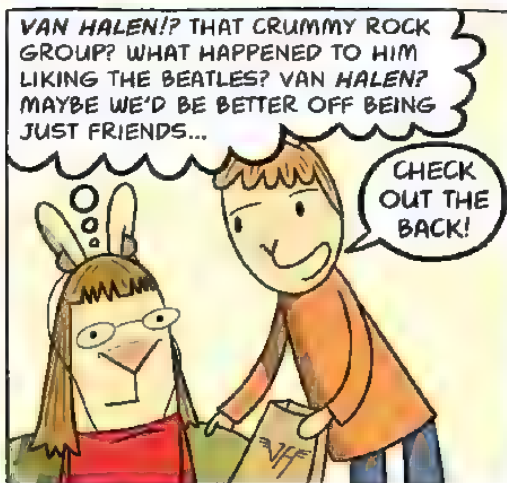


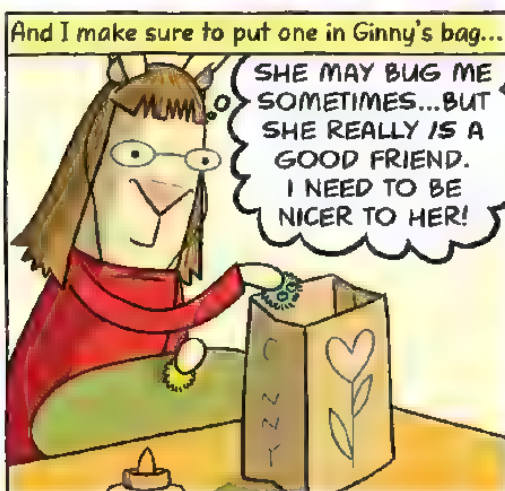






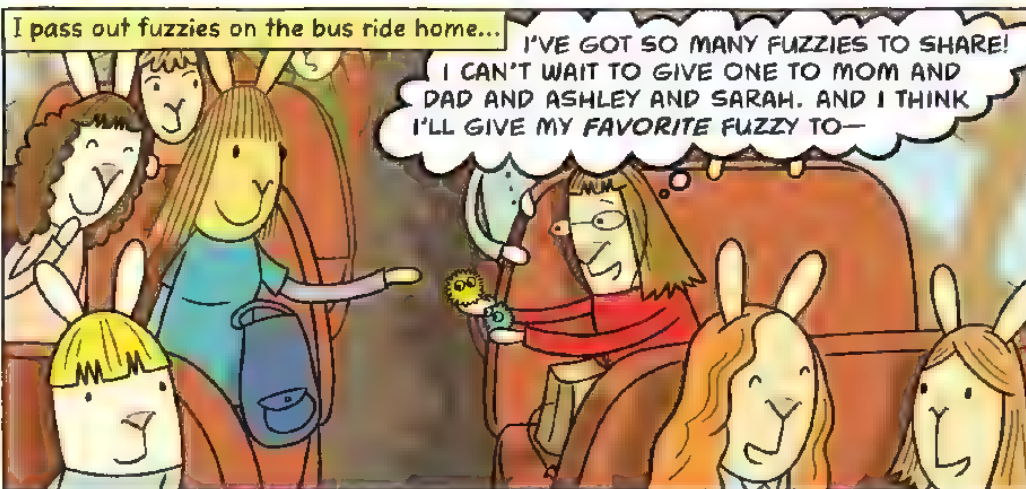
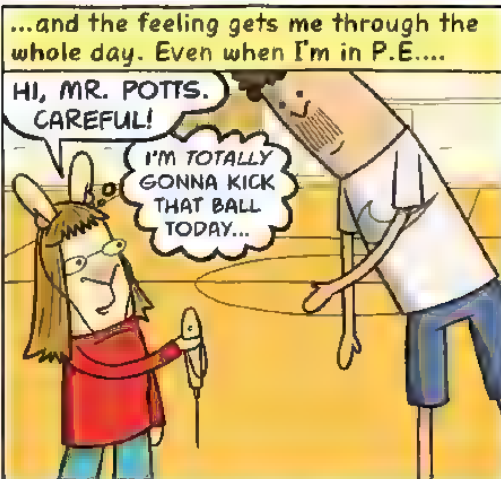
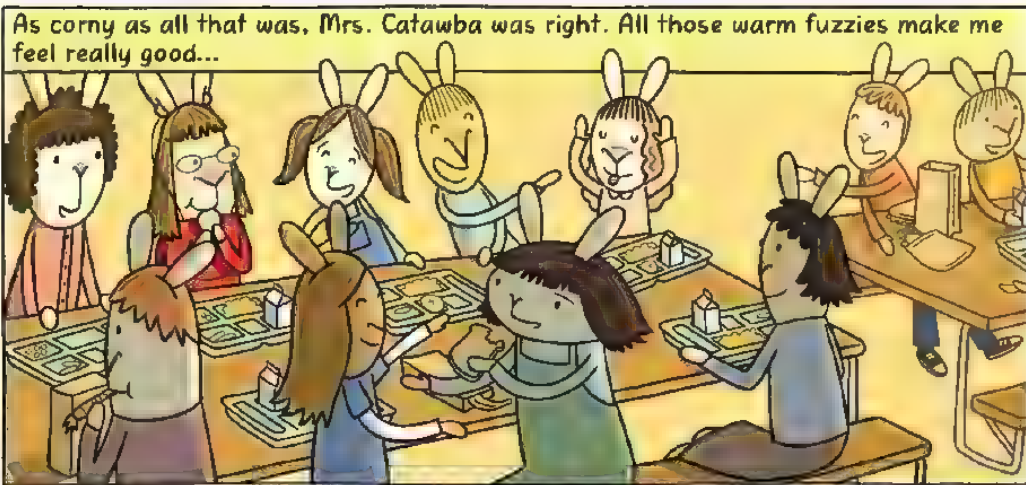


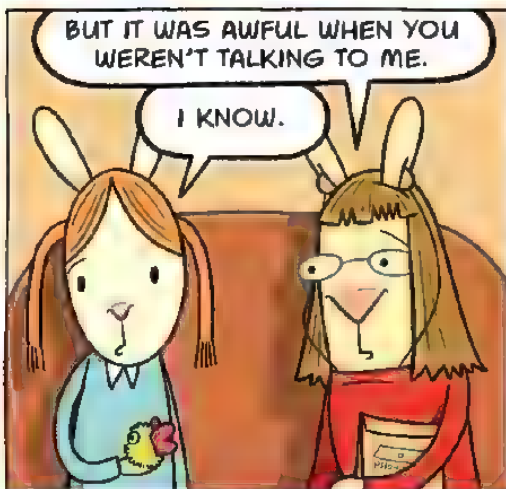
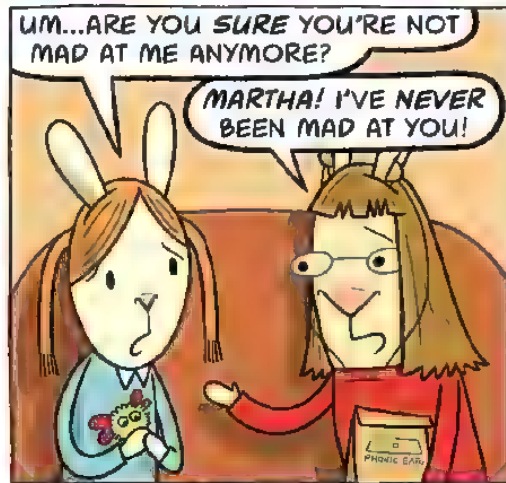




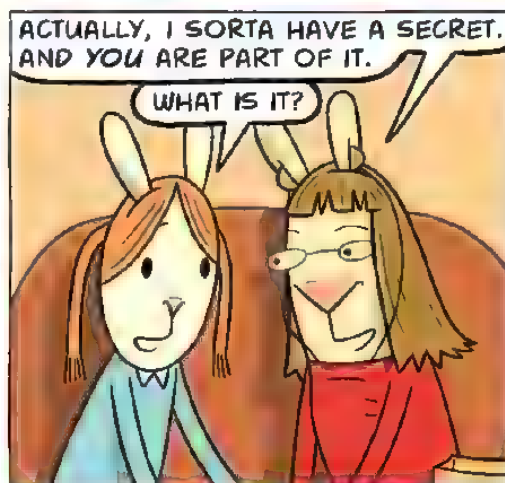
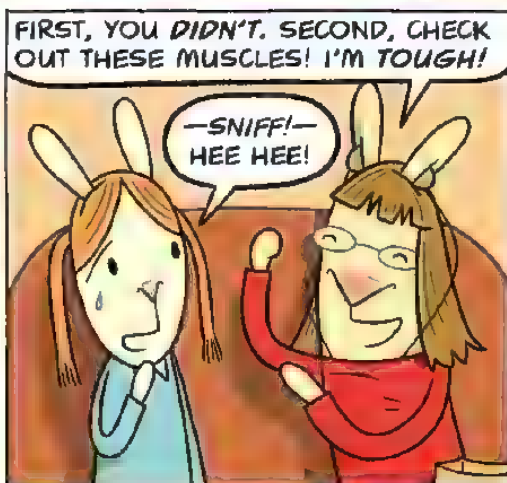


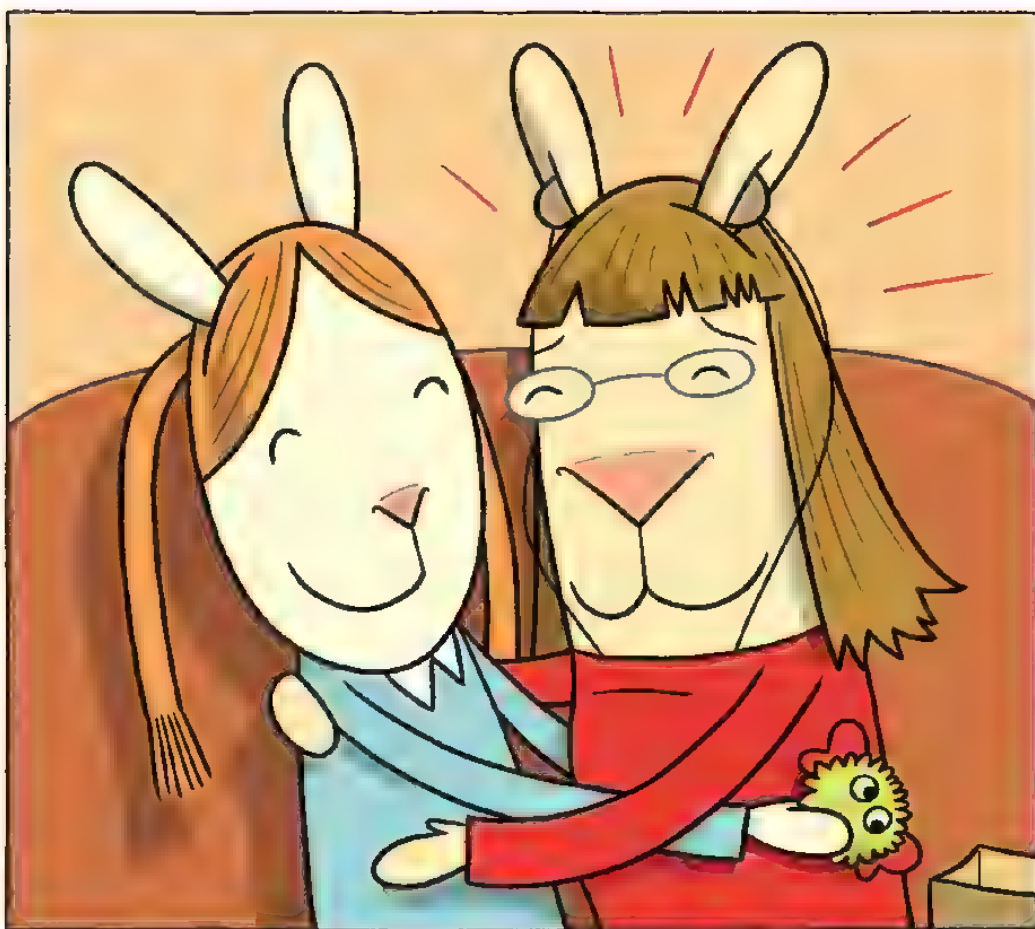












OK. I THINK IT'S FINALLY TIME TO TELL YOU ALL ABOUT...  
**EL DEAFO!**









## A Note from the Author

People can become deaf in many different ways. Some are born deaf, to either deaf or hearing parents. Some are exposed to one big, loud noise, and they lose their hearing immediately. Some might be exposed to lots of noise over a long period of time, and they lose their hearing gradually. Some might get sick with some illness or another and lose their hearing as a result of the disease.

Each deaf person also has a different *amount* of deafness—how much he or she can hear without the assistance of a hearing aid or a cochlear implant. One can be mildly deaf, moderately deaf, severely deaf, or profoundly deaf.

But more important than how the hearing loss happened, or how much hearing loss a deaf person has, is what a deaf person might choose to do with his or her hearing loss. In other words, there are lots of different ways to be deaf. And there is no right or wrong way.

Some deaf people are members of what is known as the Deaf community, also known as Deaf culture. Members of the Deaf community view their deafness as a difference, but it's a *good* difference, not a disability. Deafness is a condition that doesn't need to be fixed. Those in the Deaf community might—or might not—use hearing aids and cochlear implants to amplify sounds and speech. Sign language is the preferred means of communication in the Deaf community; Deaf people might—or might not—choose (or be able) to speak orally.

Other deaf people, however, *do* want to “fix” their hearing loss. They amplify their residual hearing with the help of hearing aids or cochlear implants. They may speak and read lips, and may or may not supplement their speech with sign language. They might think of their deafness as a difference, and they might, either secretly or openly, think of it as a disability, too.

And, I am sure, there are plenty of deaf people who would read the descriptions above and not recognize themselves at all. I am an expert on no one's deafness but my own.

I myself am "severely to profoundly" deaf, the result of a brief illness when I was four years old. While I'm fascinated by Deaf culture, I have not, as yet, pursued a direct role in it. Since I could hear and speak before I got sick, my parents were able to make decisions for me that kept me mostly in the hearing world. Their choices, and the choices that I made for myself later, helped me become pretty comfortable there. But I wasn't always so comfortable.

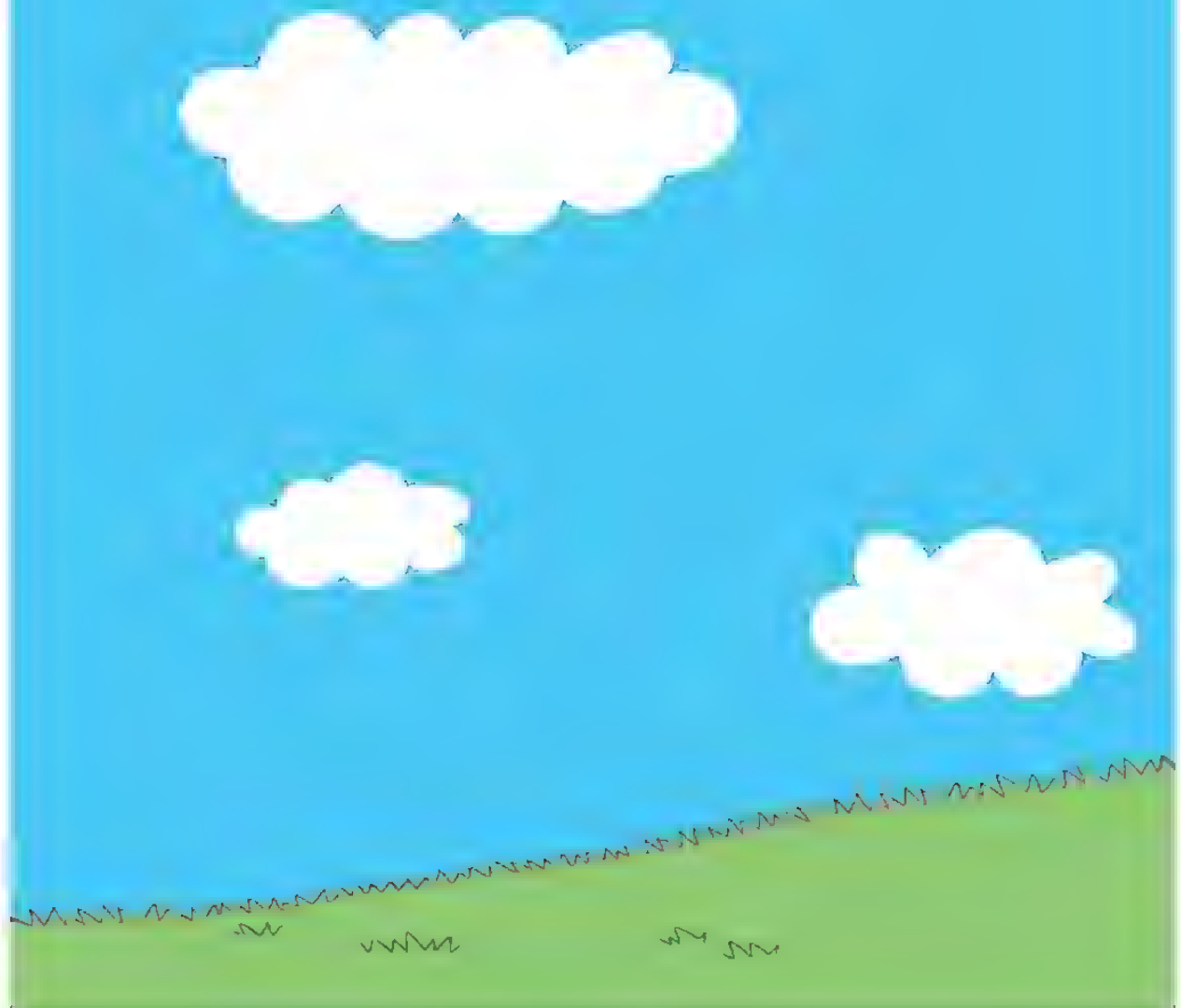
*El Deafo* is based on my childhood (and on the secret nickname I really did give myself back then). It is in no way a representation of what all deaf people might experience. It's also important to note that while I was writing and drawing the book, I was more interested in capturing the specific feelings I had as a kid with hearing loss than in being 100 percent accurate with the details. Some of the characters in the book are exactly how I remember them; others are composites of more than one person. Some of the events in the book are in the right order; others got mixed up a bit. Some of the conversations are real; others, well, ain't. But the way I *felt* as a kid—that feeling is all true. I was a deaf kid surrounded by kids who could hear. I felt different, and in my mind, being different was *not* a good thing. I secretly, *and* openly, believed that my deafness, in making me so different, was a disability. And I was ashamed.

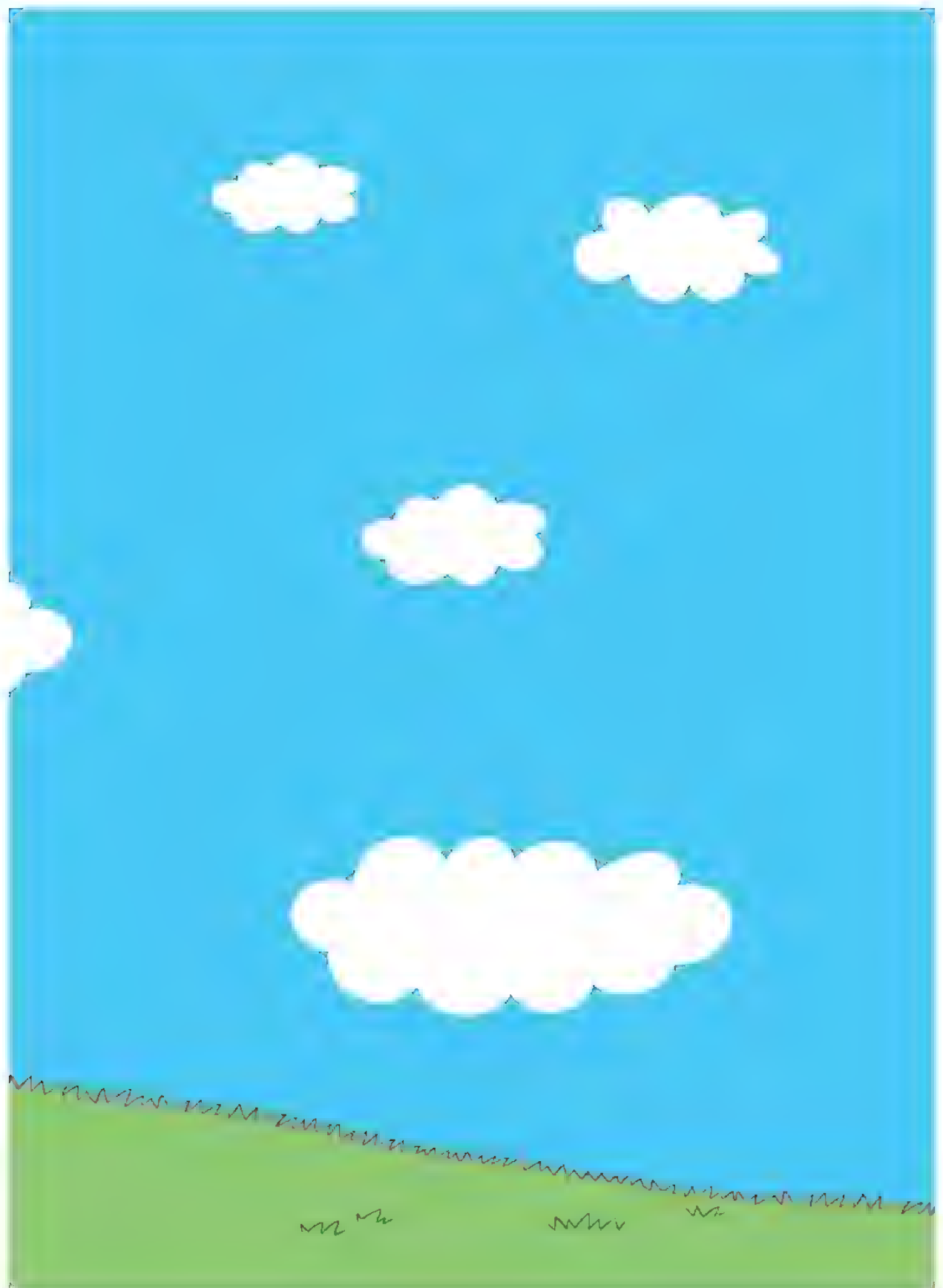
As I grew up, however, I made some positive discoveries about deafness and about myself. I'm no longer ashamed of being deaf, nor do I think of myself as someone with a disability. I've even developed a real appreciation for sign language. To the kid me,



being deaf was a defining characteristic, one I tried to hide. Now it defines a smaller part of me, and I don't try to hide it—much. Today, I view my deafness as more of an occasional nuisance, and oddly enough, as a gift: I can turn off the sound of the world any time I want, and retreat into peaceful silence.

And being different? That turned out to be the best part of all. I found that with a little creativity, and a lot of dedication, any difference can be turned into something amazing. Our differences are our *superpowers*





## Acknowledgments

I wish there was enough room on these pages to acknowledge every friend, every family member, and every person who was nice to me at one point or another. If you are one of the above, consider yourself acknowledged, and heartily!

A lot of people helped me create and promote this book:

Susan Van Metre believed in *El Deafo* when it was just a typed outline on two pieces of paper. She guided the book through every stage, and became a true friend along the way.

College pal David Lasky brought the book to life with his expert coloring and masterful shadow making. David's pal Frank M. Young assisted him a bit with a few of the later chapters.

Chad W. Beckerman and Katie Fitch used their estimable superpowers to put together this beautiful book. Caitlin Keegan came up with the gorgeous cover design. Sara Corbett guided the interior in the initial stages and was one of the earliest fans of the book.

Jen Graham read and reread the book so many times to get the text just right.

Sheila Keenan and Charlie Kochman shared their comics expertise.

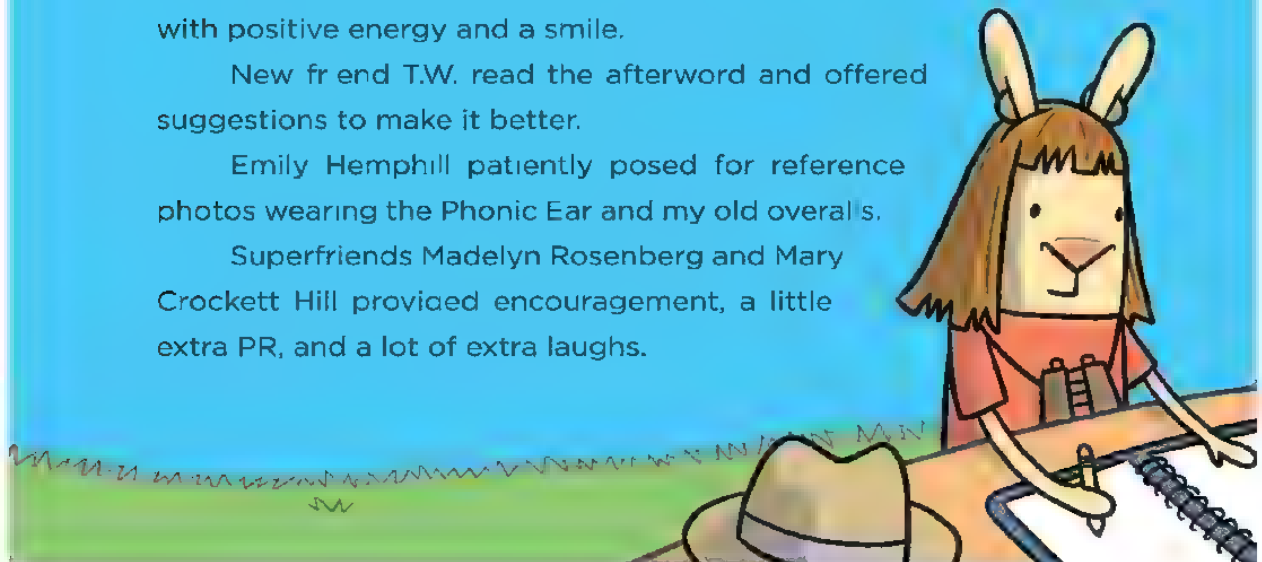
Laura Mihaick and Jason Wells helped spread the word about *El Deafo*.

Caryn Wiseman did many things behind the scenes with positive energy and a smile.

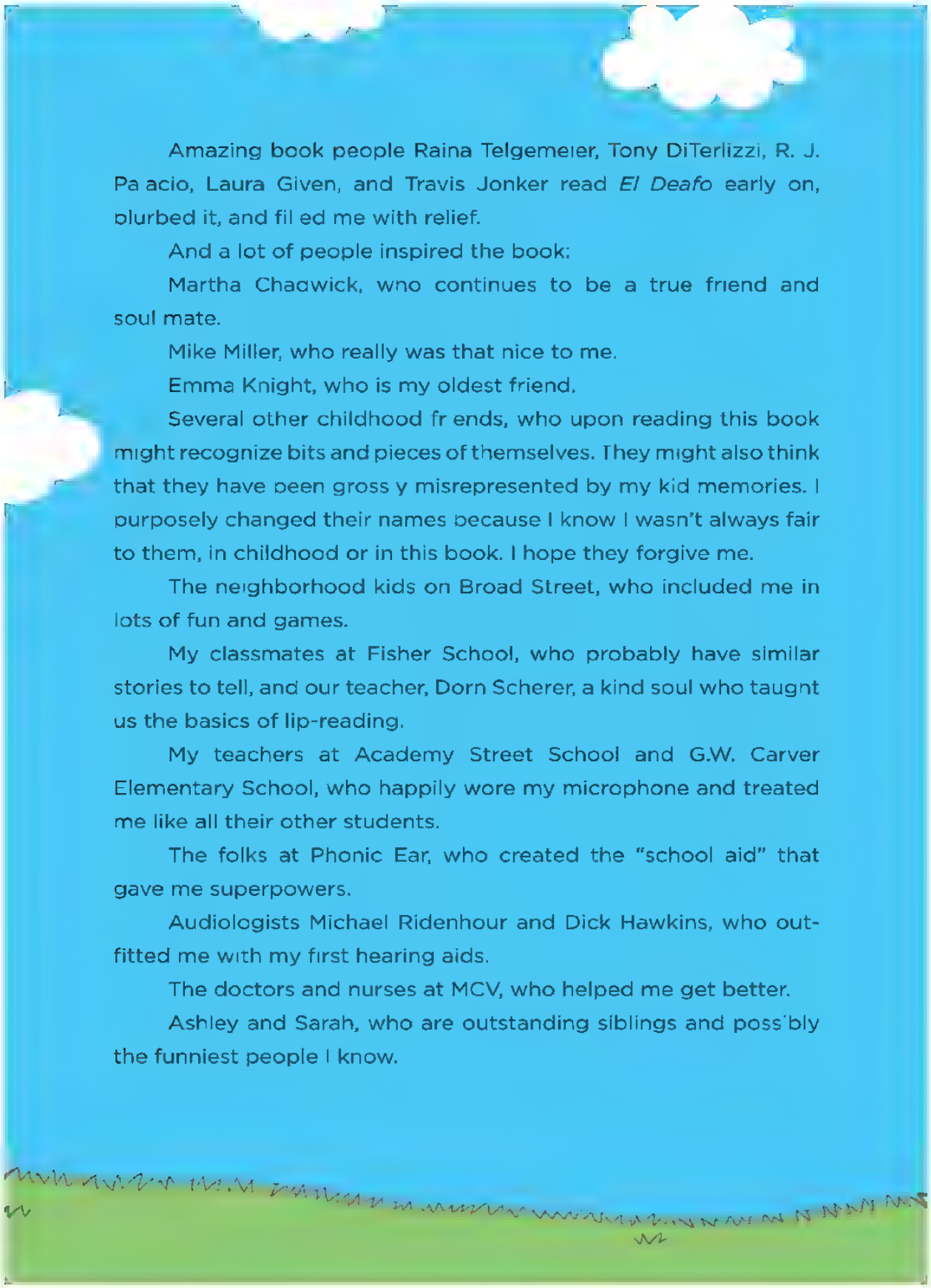
New friend T.W. read the afterword and offered suggestions to make it better.

Emily Hemphill patiently posed for reference photos wearing the Phonic Ear and my old overalls.

Superfriends Madelyn Rosenberg and Mary Crockett Hill provided encouragement, a little extra PR, and a lot of extra laughs.







Amazing book people Raina Telgemeier, Tony DiTerlizzi, R. J. Palacio, Laura Givens, and Travis Jonker read *El Deafo* early on, plurbed it, and filled me with relief.

And a lot of people inspired the book:

Martha Chadwick, who continues to be a true friend and soul mate.

Mike Miller, who really was that nice to me.

Emma Knight, who is my oldest friend.

Several other childhood friends, who upon reading this book might recognize bits and pieces of themselves. They might also think that they have been grossly misrepresented by my kid memories. I purposely changed their names because I know I wasn't always fair to them, in childhood or in this book. I hope they forgive me.

The neighborhood kids on Broad Street, who included me in lots of fun and games.

My classmates at Fisher School, who probably have similar stories to tell, and our teacher, Dorn Scherer, a kind soul who taught us the basics of lip-reading.

My teachers at Academy Street School and G.W. Carver Elementary School, who happily wore my microphone and treated me like all their other students.

The folks at Phonic Ear, who created the "school aid" that gave me superpowers.

Audiologists Michael Ridenhour and Dick Hawkins, who outfitted me with my first hearing aids.

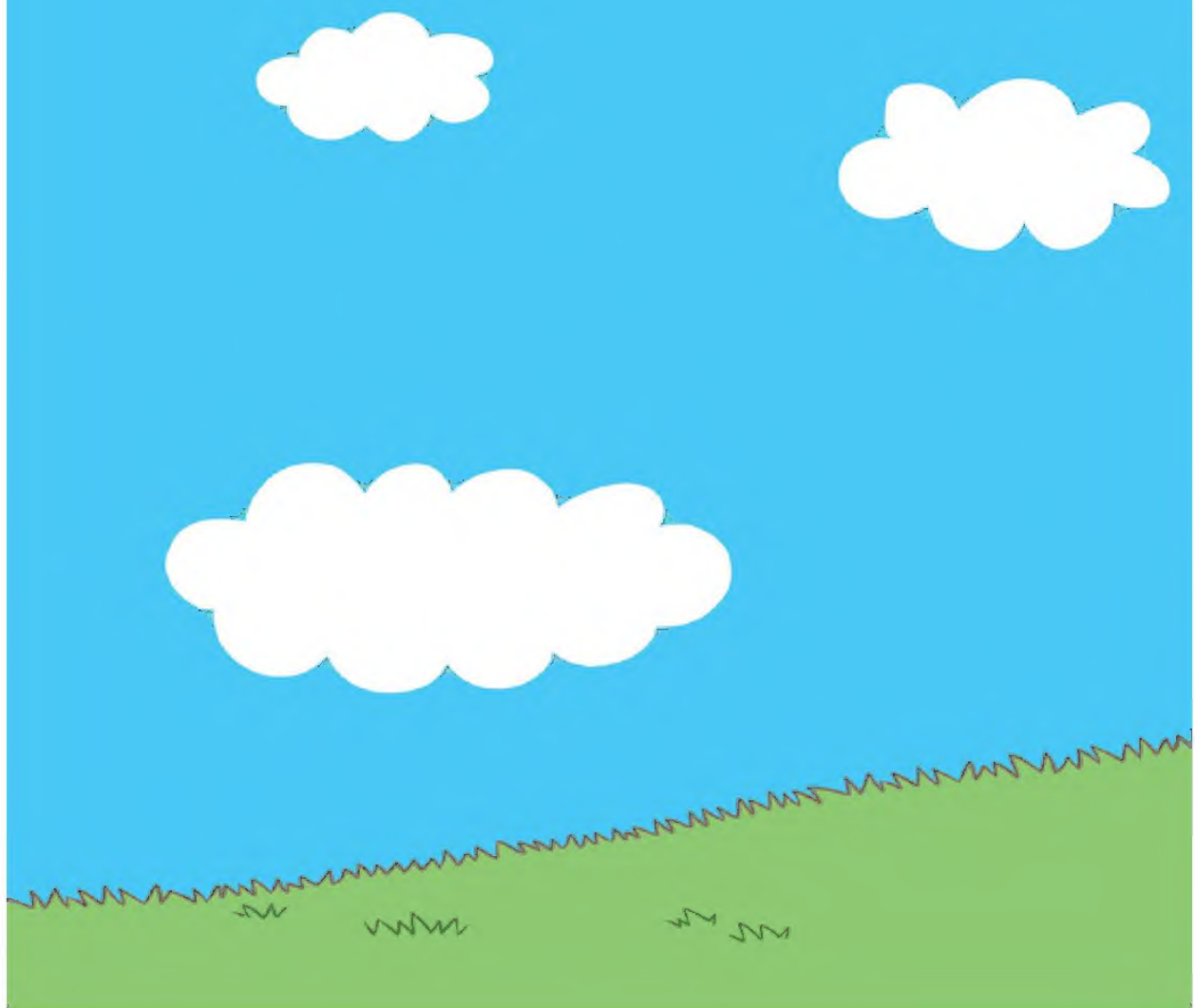
The doctors and nurses at MCV, who helped me get better.

Ashley and Sarah, who are outstanding siblings and possibly the funniest people I know.

Mom and Dad, who made all the tough decisions during what must have been a tricky time in their lives. I wish I had better words than “thank you” to express how grateful I am to both of you.

C and O, who bring me joy every day.

And Tom Angleberger, who is my truest friend of all.





**Cece Bell** has written and illustrated several books for children, including the Geisel Honor book *Rabbit & Robot: The Sleepover*. She lives in Virginia with her husband, Tom Angleberger.





"Full of warmth, humor, and superpowered strength, *El Deafo* is an absolute treat."

— Raina Telgemeier, author of *Smile*

**STARTING AT A NEW SCHOOL** is scary, even more so with a giant hearing aid strapped to your chest! At her old school, everyone in Cece's class was deaf. Here she is different. She is sure the kids are staring at the Phonic Ear, the powerful aid that will help her hear her teacher. Too bad it also seems certain to repel potential friends.

Then Cece makes a startling discovery. With the Phonic Ear she can hear her teacher not just in the classroom, but anywhere her teacher is in the school—in the hallway . . . in the teacher's lounge . . . in the bathroom! This is power. Maybe even superpower! Cece is on her way to becoming El Deafo, Listener for All. But the funny thing about being a superhero is that it's just another way of feeling different . . . and lonely. Can Cece channel her powers into finding the thing she wants most, a true friend?

This funny, perceptive graphic novel memoir about growing up deaf is also an unforgettable book about growing up, and all the super and super embarrassing moments along the way.

**CECE BELL** has written and illustrated several books for children, including the Geisel Honor book *Rabbit & Robot: The Sleepover*. She lives in Virginia with her husband, author Tom Angleberger.

"Even with a hearing aid turned off, you hear Cece's universal plea for acceptance, friendship, and happiness through honest words and deftly drawn pictures."

— Tony DiTerlizzi,  
co-creator of *The Spiderwick Chronicles*

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